SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF CASTE ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH INDIAN STATES

Edited by

Dr. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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Dr.R.Balasubramanian
Professor and Head
Dept. of Politics and Public Administration
University of Madras
Chennai - 600005

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CONTENTS

Page No.

Preface

Introduction

1. Issues in the Study of Caste Organisations in South India . 1
- Dr. C.A. Perumal and Dr. R. Balasubramanian

2. Caste Organisations and their Impact on Society. 11
- Prof. M.K. Subramanian

3. Reservation, Caste Associations and the Struggle for Equality in Tamil Nadu. 24
- Dr. C. Balakrishnan.

4. Dalits and Social Development in the Post-Independence India-A Historical- Critical Analysis 43
- Dr. S. Manickam

5. Caste as an Instrument for Subaltern Mobilisation - The Case of Pallars. 65
- Dr. K.A. Manikumar

6. Caste Associations - Mukkulathor - A Case Study. 83
- Dr. S. Kadhirvel

7. Social Mobilisation of Vanniars in Tamil Nadu. 90
- Dr. R. Srinivasan

8. Socio-Economic Role of Caste Associations: Lessons from Nadar Caste Associations in Thirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu 101
- Dr. G. Karunanidhi

9. Caste Organisations and Caste-based Political Outfits - Can they Contribute to Social Ends ? 106
- Dr. A. Shanmugam and Dr. N.Swaminathan

10. Caste Movements and Social Change - Study of Ayyankali Movement in Kerala. 118
- Dr. J. Prabhash

Page No.

11. S.N.D.P. Yogam and Socio-Economic Changes in Keralam 131
- Dr. C.N, Somarajan

12 The Nair Service Society in Kerala - Genesis and Socio-Economic Dimensions. 150
- Dr. S. Yamunadevi

13. Modernisation of Caste Groups and the Role of Caste Associations - A Study with reference to Nair Community in Kerala 169
- Dr. N. Jose Chander

14. The Policy of Reservation and Backward Communities in Kerala 179
- Dr. Vikraman Achary

15. The Lingayat Mutts and the Vokkaligara Sangha in Karnataka - Their Contribution to Education and Modernisation. 202
- Dr. H.M. Rajasekhara

16. The Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Karnataka - A Study of its Struggle for Justice and Emancipation 211
- Dr. D. Jeevankumar and K. Ananda

17. Dialectic of Social Justice - A Struggle of Madigas for Categorisation of Scheduled Caste Reservations in Andhra Pradesh. 228
- Dr. K.C. Suri

18. Role of Caste Associations - A Case Study . 246
- Dr. I. Ramabrahmam and E. Venkatesu.

19. Caste and Social Developments - The Case of Reddys of Andhra 264
- Dr. B. Sanjiva Reddy

20. Vysyas and their Organisations in Andhra Pradesh. 279
- Dr. K.V. Narayana Rao

List of Contributors

Dr. C.A. Perumal, Professor Emeritus, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras, Chennai.

Dr. R. Balasubramanian, Professor and Head of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras, Chennai.

Prof. M.K. Subramanian, Former Principal, Chickaiah Naicker College Erode.

Dr. C. Balakrishnan, Professor of History, Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Madras, Chennai.

Dr. S. Manickam, Professor of History, Madurai-Kamaraj University Madurai.

Dr. K.A. Manikumar, Professor of History, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thirunelveli.

Dr. S. Kadhirvel, Former Professor, Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Madras, Chennai.

Dr. R. Srinivasan, Lecturer in Public Administration, Institute of Correspondence Education, University of Madras, Chennai.

Dr. G. Karunanidhi, Professor of Sociology, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thirunelveli.

Dr. A. Shanmugam, Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, Chidambaram.

Dr. N. Swaminathan, Reader, Department of Political Science, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, Chidambaram.

Dr. J. Prabhash, Reader, Department of Political Science, University of Kerala.

Dr. C.N. Somarajan, Professor, Department of Politics, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Dr. S. Yamuna Devi, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, V.T.M.N.S.S. College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Dr. N. Jose Chander, Visiting Professor of Political Science, School of International Relations, Mahathma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.

Dr. N. Vikraman Achary, Senior Lecturer in Politics, University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Dr. H.M. Rajasekhara, Director, Academic Staff College, University of Mysore, Mysore.

Dr. D. Jeevankumar, Director, Baba Saheb Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Study and Research Centre, Department of Political Science, University of Bangalore, Bangalore.

Mr. K. Ananda, Department of Political Science, University of Bangalore, Bangalore.

Dr. K.C. Suri, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

Dr. I. Ramabrahmam, Reader, UGC Academic Staff College, Member Faculty, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. E. Venkatesu, Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.

Dr. B. Sanjiva Reddy, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Kakatiya University, Warrangal, Andhra Pradesh.

Dr. K.V. Narayana Rao, Former Professor, S.V. University, Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh.

Preface

The Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Madras came under the University Grants Commission's D.S.A. programme during 1994 1999 [First Phase]. The thrust area for the DSA programme was 'Politics and Administration in South India'. Six seminars and a couple of workshops were held covering several important themes. Scholars from the four Southern States presented research papers and participated in the deliberations.

The review of the performance of the Department in the five year period was undertaken by a Review Committee of the U.G.C. The Review Committee had a very careful and critical indepth examination of the academic achievements made by the Department during the first phase. Subsequently, on the basis of the report of the Review Committee, the U.G.C. recommended the Department to continue the programme for a further period of 5 years under DSA, II Phase 1999-2004.

In the Advisory Committee meeting, a decision was taken to organise a two day seminar on 'Caste Organisations: Social and Economic Dimensions in South Indian States' on 8th & 9th January 2001. It was decided in the Advisory Committee that there must be an attempt to probe into the non-political dimensions of caste and Caste Organisations. Hence the objective of the seminar was to throw much light on the social issues and economic achievements of Caste-Associations.

More than thirty five scholars from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala participated in the Seminar by presenting papers. The Editor had several sittings with Professors C.A. Perumal, L. Thiagarajan, M.Chidambaram and K.Sengotti and after going through all the papers persented in the Seminar finally decided to select twenty papers for this publication.

Dr. R. Balasubramanian

Introduction

The researchers of this field of study i.e. 'Caste and Socio-Economic Factors' are of the opinion that the earliest writers who directly observed the caste phenomenon were the Portuguese adventurers and merchants. Malabar Coast of Kerala provided the opportunity to the alien visitors and later other Europeans developed interest in the study of caste. Duarte Barbasa's observations were brought out in the work: A Description of the East Coast Africa and Malabar in the beginning of the Sixteenth century, published in 1866. There was also a brief note on caste system in the writings of the French merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier who made six voyages to the Middle East, India and South East Asia between (about) 1631 and 1637. After the establishment of the East India Company, British merchants and the missionaries had the opportunities to learn and write about the caste system in India. Persian writings about Indian caste system were also published later by Englishmen. Among the Europeans a few Englishmen like Alexander Dow (an officer in the East India Company's army) put serious efforts to learn the Oriental languages for the purpose of bringing out some publications on the ancient social system of India. .The Orientalists seem to have been convinced that the ancient texts were the accurate guides to the culture and society of the Hindus. Those texts were particularly establishing the view that the Brahman as the centre of the social order, which prescribed differential punishments for cirmes, based on one's varna status which prohibited other varnas than Brahman's from learning certain texts and which generally exacted the sacredness of the Brahman. Tracing further historical development of the caste system and analysing the problems created by caste conflicts during the past three centuries is beyond the scope of this publication. Only recent trends and issues in this field have been taken up by the scholars for the deliberation in the seminar.

"Debates on caste have covered in the recent past wide ranging issues related to indicators of status, levels of equality, cultural and structural

interactions, occupational mobility etc. Conceptual schemes to analyse these issues highlight structural versus cultural, closed versus attributional and corporate versus individual dimensions regarding the nature of caste in India as a system of social stratification'.

The caste feeling is rather a magnetic force which is capable of attracting the fellow members of a caste group. The strangers of the same caste group instantly become more affectionate friends as and when they come to know that they belong to the same caste. The traditional notion that in the caste-ridden atavistic societies, illiteracy has been playing a vital role in blindly breeding over the caste affinity. As such, literacy was considered to be a factor which could broaden the individual outlook and possibly enable the literate individual to nourish a cosmopolitan outlook. In reality, in the Indian situation the increase in the literacy rate and formal education has not removed the narrow attitude of the caste groups to come out of the clutches of caste feeling, rather almost all the so called educated people feel that having caste feeling is not a sin at all. It is a plain truth that the Brahmins who are known for their high level of formal education traditionally are having a larger number of Caste Associations with branches all over the land. The deep rooted caste feeling is so strong that all those efforts put in the direction of containing or removing it has miserably failed. While the exploited and oppressed of the Indian society struggle to get rid of the yoke of suppression and discrimination, the caste groups which were privileged to exploit and discriminate others relentlessly consolidate all their efforts for the purpose of retaining the status quo.

Inspite of a large number of casualties in the caste conflicts in the recent past in a few places, there are strong supporters of caste system in India. Caste politics has become an important phenomenon in Indian political system. "Caste is not simply a system of inequality, a system consisting pre-eminently of 'ideas and values' determining the inequality. The notions of pure and impure are not just "opposite" but as relative phenomena on a continuum, they have signified

the caste system more than other criteria in the past though their significance has rapidly declined paving the way for a further increase of structural bases of status and power. "Organic linkages' between different castes were characterised by division of labour and remunerative dividends with provision for grievance redressai. The role played by values and norms cannot be underestimated in the organismic structure of relations but the aim was not to simply uphold the value system at the cost of the interests of the people involved in the system". The Britishers, at least some of them, were sincere advocates of equality of human beings but by and large the British rulers were sheer opportunists and to some extent racists in their desire to remain in power, supported the reactionary section of Indian community and followed the divide and rule policy. European missionary efforts in the modernization process of India ultimately established a Christian community consisting of considerable number of caste groups strongly practising the caste identity within Christianity.

M.N. Srinivas is of the opinion that in the process of exploiting the new opportunities, significant changes are occuring in the caste system. Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn (University of Chicago) point out that the caste system is dynamic with upward and downward mobility characterising it from pre-British times to the present, modernising forces which entered the system with the British and since Independence, parliamentary democracy, universal suffrage, land reforms, modern liberal education, urbanization and industrial technology have provided new opportunities and paths to upward mobility but have radically altered the system.

M.N. Srinivas reiterates that Sanskritisation involes a change in position in the caste system but not a change in the system itself. Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn observe that the caste system is changing, with the formation of voluntary caste associations and their entry into political alignments (a considerable number of caste associations for a long time have been concentrating on socio-economic activities to bring about the necessary

awakening among the members of their caste groups, particularly in the field of education much work has been done) and into industrial employments. A case of caste endogamy and commonality may persist, but new pattern of social relations are also emerging in these new contexts. These processes of change are not adequately defined in terms of the social and anthropological concepts of 'equillibrium adjustments' or structural change'. These are no linear transformations of 'structural types' and yet there is significant social movement and change. One might interpret this situation by arguing that the gradualness of change in Indian society is simply a reflection of the limited amount of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, and another equally plausible explanation is that Indian Civilization has built into adaptive mechanism for incorporating new techniques, new ideas and new comers with only a gradual of the old.

As stated in the preface, this seminar on 'Social and Economic Dimensions of Caste Organisations in South Indian States' was organised to invite papers on various related issues of caste which are non-political since much work has been done on caste politics. Among the twenty articles, nine focus on Tamil Nadu, five deal with Kerala, three bring about the Karnataka scenario and three others throw light on Andhra situation. C.A. Perumal and R. Balasubramanian together analyse the issues in the study of Caste Organizations in South India. M.K. Subramanian explains Caste Organisations and their impact on society with the help of the different caste organisations of Tamil Nadu. C. Balakrishnan deals with Reservations: Caste Association and the Struggle for Equality in Tamil Nadu. S. Manickam provides a critical analysis of 'Dalits and Social Development in the post independence India. K.A. Manikumar describes the case of 'Pallars' and subaltern mobilization. S. Kadhirvel presents a case study of Mukkulathor Caste. R.Srinivasn sketches the Social Mobilization of Vanniars in Tamil Nadu. G. Karunanidhi narrates the Socio-economic role of Nadar Association of Tamil Nadu. A.Shanmugam and N.Swaminathan are

able to crtically analyse the role of the caste organisations and the possible contribution or otherwise to the society. J. Prabhash elucidates the Caste Movement and Social Change in Kerala. C.N. Somarajan's article discusses the role of 'SNDP Yogam' and socio-economic changes in Kerala. Yamuna Devi's 'The Nair Service Society (NSS) in Kerala' consolidates the activities of the NSS. The process of modernization of caste group is presented by Jose Chander. Vikraman Achary throws light on Kerala's Reservation Policy.

There are two articles dealing with the activities of caste Associations of Karnataka. H.M. Rajasekhara describes the Role of Lingayat Mutts, the organizations of Lingayat caste groups and Vokkalika Caste Associations in promoting educational institutions. The Dalit Organizations' Activities and Achievements are explained by Jeevan Kumar and Ananda

Andhra scenario is put forth by four scholars. K.C. Suri has given a vivid description of Dalit Movement. I. Ramabrahmam and Venkatesu explain the status of Gouds. Sanjiva Reddy presents the social development picture of the Reddys. K.V. Narayana Rao provides a detailed account of the Vysya Caste Associations. On the whole, this collection of essays on Caste Organisations is an additional source of information for the students of social sciences and a veritable guide for the future research.

ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF CASTE ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH INDIA

Dr. C.A. Perumal & Dr. R.Balasubramanian

Caste organisations and politics in South India, as a field of study, has so far been greatly neglected. Western scholars who posses inadequate knowledge often lose themselves in translation niceties and interpretation of southern social realities. Sometimes, they force Western ideas and theoretical framework to be acceptable to South Indian situation. In the few attempts to study the phenomenon of communalism no effort seems to have been made to provide a suitable or proper theoretical framework. Most studies try to describe the phenomenon and satisfy with it. Again Western scholars have quite often run into the danger of recognising too much similarities that are to be found in South Indian and Western societies. Sometimes they have perversely read the present into the past or have tried to equate ideas that are only superficially alike. Though it is a pity that Indian scholars too, who are mostly trained in Western ideas, force an equation of South Indian and Western concepts. Though a certain similarity does exist, the Western concept is allowed to shape the South Indian situation. Similarly contemporary scholars have apparently been motivated by the desire to find in South Indian political history either a democratic tradition that could be exploited for the purpose of nation building, or a regionalistic tradition which could ultimately lead to chauvinistic tendencies and separatist designs. Besides, research in several topics in South India have become delicate and sensitive. The politics of Madras State since 1916 (i.e. after the establishment of the South Indián Liberal Federation or the Justice Party) has been considered a problematic area for a local social scientist to attempt any clarification.

Owing to the essentially communal nature of the problem, cultural embarassments have inhibited the intellectual curiosity and articulation and therefore there has hardly been any adequate research in this area. Scholars both Brahmins and non-Brahmins, have avoided exploring this area and period for want of scientific curiosity and dispassionate understanding among the public.

There appears to have a lurking fear among the local intellectuals, who would be disowned both by their own caste and despised by the other castes, if they attempt to tell the truth, or even half the truth. Members of castes want their elites and intellectuals to write only hagiographic accounts of their castes and leaders. At times the issues to be discussed are either socially sensitive, intellectually controversial, politically explosive and culturally embarrassing.

One of the most significant aspects of South Indian society is the absence of the fourfold classification of the Hindu society as it is found in northern India. The South Indian society is divided into at times two and often into three groups; Brahmins, Non-Brahmins, and Harijans. The Non-Brahmins constitute a heterogenous group like the present day Scheduled Castes under the Indian Constitution. There are no Kshatriyas and vaisyas in the southern classification. This summary dichotomization or trichotimization is justified by political history and also by the fact that it provides the broad base for communal politics in South. The non-Brahmin movement introduced the commnunal idiom into the politics of Madras Presidency. The Brahmin's social base of power, which became the targets of non-Brahmin's attacks rested on three factors. The ethnic factor - the imputed difference in racial origin - the difference in language usage - an Aryan element is superimposed on the Dravidian population and culture;second that there is a high proportion of landowners among the Brahmins; thirdly the political factor which means that under British rule, there was a large number of Brahmins in education, in profession, and in government service and also in the political leadership of the Indian national movement. Hence, the non-Brahmins resented to this, Brahmin predominance and slowly removed them from the political arena since the Mont-Ford reforms. This does not mean that South India is free from the influence of castes or free from caste politics. The non-Brahmin upper caste Hindus have been dominating the political life, the Brahmin domination was replaced by non-Brahmin upper caste rule. The newer trend is that the depressed and socially backward castes are up against the higher castes and demand a proportionate share in the political and administrative cake. The Vanniyar's demand for more representation in the legislature and administration in Tamilnadu is a pointer in this regard. Most of these castes have started organising themselves into caste organisation and function as effective pressure groups. Communal reservation was introduced

almost from the days of Minto-Morley reforms. The demand for statutory protection for non-Brahmins in jobs were granted in Madras Presidency against the minority caste (Brahmins) which hardly constituted three percent of the Hindu population, by successive government orders from 1921 to the present and reservation in jobs and education for the non-Brahmins have gone up to 69 percent.

The expression Madras, and Madhrassi or South India denotes a geographical region and a cultural entity like that of Latin America or Scandinavia. Though this region, south of the Vindhyas has been generally known in the north as Madras, for the purpose of cultural and political understanding, it includes the old composite Madras Presidency, parts of Nizam's Hyderabad State, the Princely States of Travancore, Cochin and Mysore and the former French territory of Pondicherry. Since the reorganisation of States in 1956, the region now comprises of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry is generally known as South India. This region has four different languages namely Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu, each with a distinct literature and a separate script. Besides these, there are a few dialects like Tulu, Konkani etc. Linguists and philologists consider that these are Dravidian languages, quite different from the Indo-European languages. All these are, to some extent, an admixture of Sanskrit, though Tamil has the least Sanskritic influence. The literature in all these languages is mainly based on the epics and philosophies of ancient Hindus. While sanskrit has become a dead language, Tamil, inspite of its age, continues to be a living language and Tamils take special pride about this cultural feat. Further it is claimed that Tamil is the mother language which has given birth to the other South Indian (Dravidian) languages. Therefore the Tamils glorify their language and vehimently oppose any move from any quarter which tries to undermine their cultural heritage. The leaders of Tamil Nationalism exploited this sentiment successfully. In fact, the projection of Tamil language stood in the way of establishing a Dravidian State in the South as the Telugus, Kannadigas and Malayalees opposed the move of a Tamil dominated Dravidian state. They were very keen to protect and preserve their separate identity. Therefore the politics of language has become one of the

major determinants in the socio-political process of Tamil Nadu. The composite character of South India helped the spread of English language and it was the only link language among these states since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Early westernisation and urbanisation of India started from Madras. The Britishers consolidated thier position from the last decades of the 17th century at Fort.St.George and started expanding into the interior and excercised their sphere of influence. Madras, being a composite unit, became a fertile area for the English East India Company to introduce their language, system of administration and law. The whole South was linked with a common administrative set up and a common educational system. The administrative culture of Madras is a legacy of the British. Even the Princely States of Hyderabad, Mysore, Cochin and Travancore were under the political and administrative paramountcy of Great Britain. The composite culture of Madras facilitated the easy spread and growth of English education and the English language became the official language among the four states. In addition to it, the system of Parliamentary government, democratic decentralisation, respect for authority, law and order have prevailed in the South. The survey and the land settlement including the ryotwari system of land tenure have become common and universal. The Tamil's opposition to Hindi could be traced partly to the spread of these Anglo-Saxon values, which have grown uninterrupted over two centuries.

Yet another determinant of the politics of Tamil Nadu is its regional politics or its adherence to regionalism, emerging as a result of castes. Regional political parties are an inevitable development in India and they have a definite influence and impact upon the body politic. Madras had the unique experience of operating dyarchy under the Justice Party, the first regional political party in India. The traditions and culture of the Justice Party re-emerged in 1967. The politics of Tamil Nadu, has been considerably influenced with the interplay of nationalism and regionalism and caste. In fact the minor political parties may be said to condition and modify the major parties as the habitate of an organism determines its characteristics. The different linguistic states represent not only administrative regions but they stand for different regional nations. Over and above these sub nationalities exist with the newly fostered Indian nationality, while the regional

loyalties are strongly rooted, the all India nationality is a compromise of these regional loyalties. Whenever India as a whole is threatened, the whole country stands united. However, when there is no such(external), engrossing all India concern, the regionl loyalties dominate the political scene. It stands to reason that the stability of India depends on the maintenance of the balance between these two levels of loyalties. Positively speaking the bitterness between the regional forces and the Congress has led to the crystalisation and consolidation of the non-congressist ideology in both the national and regional scenes. However, the regional parties feel that they are unable to match to the organisation and resources of the Congress party politically and therefore try to veer around electoral coalitions mostly and governmental coalitions in a few instances. That is to say, the regional parties have also mastered the number game of the Congress and repay it in their own coin. Regional parties will not be obsolete, the region has also definite vision of the uses of political power. In such a situation, is it not imperative to construe that the nation and the regions are simply not antithetical but complementary. It is time that regionalism in India is to be treated more as a cure than a disease, for this perspective would lead to harmonious working of the Indian federal system.

Caste as traditional principle to social stratification involving ascriptive allocation of occupation, continues to characterise society and polity in India. Its extreme forms can still be found in most of the villages in India where it continues to be a pervasive and all embracing phenomenon that controls and defines social, economic and political relations of the individual. It appears to be so much deep-rooted in the cultural system that while the whole society has been undergoing a steady transformation, due to urbanisation, industrialisation, secularisation and westernisation, its residual influence on social and political behaviours have tended to persist. In fact, caste involving culturally defined patterns of institutionalised inequality, has itself been the greatest impediment to the efforts of economic and political modernisation. "Caste is a group of endogemous people living in most of the cases in contiguous area; supposed to be doing certain jobs in a hereditary way; having a position of hierarchy which is purely local and at the top of this hierarchy where a group of caste whose touch was supposed to pollute the higher castes; as a consequence of habitation area,

villages and towns are divided into an area in which all higher castes lived and another area in which the lowest castes lived." In Indian social structure, caste plays an important role, both as an element of wider social structure and as a barrier to alien ideas and programmes.

The protagonists of caste system in Indian society say that it gives a person an identity and sphere of action and achievement. People identify themselves as belonging to a named family. a particular village or a particular caste. These are not only principles of identification but also of personal security to a certain extent. Still quite many believe that caste today is proving to be a stumbling block in the process of democratisation of Indian polity. This is because it has tended to become the only effective way for securing effective political power and command over the population of one's own caste. In this use of caste all the old factors known to be possessed by the system play their role. It is clear that caste both as an institution and as a system of social organisation continues to strongly influence cultural, economic and political aspects of Indian society. "The vast majority of the people, according to late M.N. Srinivas, not only want caste to disappear but they would probably find it impossible to envisage a social system without caste." Even radical social scientists who condemned it as an obstacle to economic development and political modernisation in the country have unwillingly admitted its pervasive character involving a state of mind which is among the most constraining facts of social and political life. Even recent empirical studies which have tried to explore the interaction between traditional social structure and modern democratic politics simply coroborate the fact that caste continues to be a predominant consideration for the average Indian voter especially in rural areas, and as such, it still appears to be the very basis of social and political mobilisation. Urbanisation and adult franchise have altered the situation only marginally.

One of the major effects of adult franchise has been a shift in the locus of power from traditionally dominant castes to numerically stronger castes, which involves political dominance of middle and lower middle castes. For these castes, caste consciousness has been mixed with economic and political uses. Age, income, education and communication seem to influence caste proneness of the voters of the castes, irrespective of their ecological and social background.

Similar changes have been observed in the leadership positions of high castes. There is a tendency on their part of seeking support of the lower castes and even identify themselves at least functionally, as the leaders of these castes enjoy substantial numerical strength in a given area. Their leadership role being no longer characterised by dominance based on ritual status, they have been replaced by an emerging cadre of new leaders from these castes. These significant changes are indicative of changing higher caste-lower caste power relationship in a democratic system. Another important factor in the present democratic elections is the numerical strength of a caste in proportion to other castes. Last but not the least is the position, a caste holds in a hierarchical system. A minority may be such a critical minority that its votes may decide, who of the contending persons from the majority caste is going to win.

There is another important trend one cannot ignore to observe, the growing urge for participation in a democratic polity has given rise to various caste organisations. Though caste organisations started springing up only after 1909, to state their claims for political patronage under the Minto-Morley Reforms, it was mushrooming rapidly from 1919 and more so after 1950. This is because of the politicisation of castes or the castesisation of politics. Caste organisations not only functioned as pressure groups but also agents of political mobilisation. Most of these organisations with identical interests are marked with a tendency to continue as a pressure group by obtaining by way of suppressing initially as an imperative of political expediency, inter-caste prejudices of the past, and seeking legitimate shares in the gains of economic planning and modernization. This has greatly facilitated a shift to the locus of power from traditionally dominant higher castes to numerically stronger lower castes. Thus the process of social emancipation of the middle and lower castes seem to be facilitated by the growing exposure to mass media.

The twin aspects of caste-hierarchy and division are perpetuated by an occupational adherence to the rule of endogamy which serves as a centripetal force within the wall of a caste and a centrifugal one between different castes. It has sustained the caste system against all adverse forces. The peculiar blend of status and function characteristics of Indian caste is sustained mainly by the

continuing preferences of the individual to marry within his caste. S. Saraswathy says that "the Indian caste, based on the tie of kinship in a biologically self-perpetuating unit - a Hindu can neither choose nor change his caste." Modern sociologists and social anthropologists also stress this factor of endogamy as the very foundation of caste system. The economic transformation of India during the last several decades - the growth of transport, industries, the spread of education, the increasing urbanisation, the welfare state and democracy have shaken the fabric of the Indian social order. An apparent relaxation of the rigorous rules of caste is noticeable. A man's occupation now is not necessarily his hereditary calling because of the profession of new jobs that have come up. A free admixture of caste is inevitable in public life, this has loosened to a remarkable extent the rigour of caste regulations of purity and pollution. Among the educated and urban sections of the population there is undoubtedly a considerable loss of faith in the old pollution now entails criminal prosecution, yet caste seems to be incapable of vanishing on its own accord or being destroyed by the influence of education, welfare state or democracy.

Another significant factor about caste is its very number, since the earlier times, castes were said to grow in number by endless mutations and minglings. Deviation from the established caste practices, adoption of a new occupation, migration, adoption of changes in social conventions, religious cults, rituals and ceremonies were some reasons that contributed to the formation of new castes by the process of fusion or fission. The compilers of the Census of India (1881) who made a thorough investigation into the ramification of caste have noted the incredible figure of 19,044 denomination of sub-castes in the Madras Presidency alone.

It is in this social millieu that politics enters. Rajni Kothari's articulation on the forms and consequences of the impact of politics of caste is quite relevant and valid. He begins with the question: Is caste disappearing ? Now surely no social system disappears like that. What form is caste taking under the impact of modern politics and what form politics is taking in a caste oriented society. Those in India who complain of "Casteism in Politics" are really looking for a sort of politics which has no social base. They also probably lack any clear conception

of either the nature of politics or the nature of caste system. Politics is competitive enterprise, its purpose is the acquisation of power for the realisation of certain goals and its process is one of identifying and manipulating existing and emerging alliances in order to mobilise and consolidate positions.

The important one is organisation and articulation of support, and where politics is mass based. The point is articulating support through the organisations in which the masses are to be found. It follows that where the caste structure provides one of the principal organisational clusters along with the bulk of the population is found to live, politics must strive to organise through such a structure. The alleged "Casteism in Politics" is thus no more and no less than "Politicisation of Caste". It is something in which both the forms of caste and the forms of politics are brought nearer to each other, in the process of changing both. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kin groups on the other hand, get a change to assert their identity and strive for positions. Drawing upon both the interacting structures are the real actors, the new contestants for power. Politicians mobilise caste grouping and identities in order to organise their power. They find in it an extremely well articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that may have been structured in terms of a status hierarchy but something that is also available for political manipulation. Thus we find a good nexus between caste and politicians. We may even hypothesise that caste and politics are made for each other.

To understand the role of caste in politics or vice versa, we have to keep the following in mind. We do not have any official, and authoritative data on the number of castes, except that the Census Report of 1881, which has been projected from time to time upto 1991. It is presumed that more than ten thousand castes exist in Tamilnadu, from a mere couple of thousand of people for some castes to a few millions of people for some other castes. The student of social research on Caste Organisations is really handicapped due to the lack of suitable data on castes and their relative population strength. Names of quite a larger number of castes are changed and new castes have come into existence since the earlier census of 1881. The projected figures of 1991 may not be an accurate one in view of the fact that many of the higher castes, by virtue of their access to

western education, economic affluence and service in the government - must have adopted family planning and the population of these castes must have decreased. The lists of castes available with the Government cannot be fully relied on, because they have grouped castes having similar occupation i.e varna, which is not a scientific way of classifying or cataloguing castes. These days several castes may be pursuing or following a similar profession or occupation (eg) teaching or members of the same caste may be following diverse occupations. Hence occupations (Varna) cannot be a satisfactory index for caste cataloguing. What we have to consider is the Jati or Kulam irrespective of occupation. Quite often we find duplication which could have been avoided. For example, the name Agamudiar appears among the Mukkulathors as well as the Mudaliars in Tamilnadu. When we use the terminology "Meenavar" - fishermen it includes, Paravar, Mukkuvar, Chettiar, etc., create yet another problem. Hence a satisfactory empirical analysis of caste and its role becomes more difficult. We have to depend on the data available with caste organisations, which again has two problems : a) the figures available with Caste Organisations are quite often inflated and (b) many small castes do not have any Caste Organisations. The political history of Madras Presidency since 1919 has been Brahmins Vs non-Brahmins both in the legislature and in the public services. The concept of non-Brahmins is now becoming obsolete. The non-Brahmins constitute a congeries of castes other than Brahmins and perhaps, excluding another congeries of castes called the Scheduled Castes, which may not help us much in understanding the nexus between caste and politics in South India. The caste system has characterised several levels of differentiation, the larger units are divided into smaller ones and these are sub-divided on the basis of fairly enduring cleavages. The divisions and sub-divisions either merge with one another or are placed in opposition, depending upon their context. In a given context, a unit of a lower caste may loose its identity through merging with an adjacent unit, in another it may reappear as an independent entity, though the system as a whole retains a degree of continuity over a period of time. The role of caste in the socio-economic life also depends on caste at the political level and caste at the social and ritual level, the latter is much smaller unit than the former. Caste is playing an effective role in the Panchayat and though it is not much effective at the state or national level, at the moment. However the coming decades, it appears, belong to castes, especially the numerically strong, often the lower ones.

THE CASTE ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Prof. M.K.Subramanian

Caste System

Right from the ancient period prior to Aryan invasion and Vedic times, the people were divided into groups functionally and territorially. The functional distribution of the people was along the trade or work pursued by them. The territorial division of the people was based on the classification of land - Kurinji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal and Palai. The people were hill tribes, cultivators, hunters, and fishermen. The functional and territorial divisions of the people- both divisions apparently in consonance with each other - remained through the Indus Valley Civilization and Sangam Age. This was not their social stratification but only functional and territorial division, very flexible indeed with mobility between the divisions being normal. This social arrangement of the people had been considered by Gail Omvedt and others as being a sort of caste formation; and she calls it "proto-caste". This "proto-caste" type was functional, territorial, flexible and it rendered easy mobility between groups.

With Aryan invasion and conquest, Aryanization process started racial mixing, racial fusion and more subtle arrangement of the prevailing divisions of the people into varunas taking place. The caste social order was based on Varnashrama Dharma. It was hierarchical, leading to oppression and suppression of lower groups (communities). The result was the enjoyment of all rights, privileges and powers was vested with upper castes while the lower castes were destined to do labour services which were looked down upon as derogatory and mean, dirty and ugly and even vulgar.

From earlier times, the caste hierarchical order of society was ceremonially organized as in marriages, family functions, temple festivals, rituals etc. It was territorially organized as in villages, towns, streets, colonies etc. Its modern trend was "Politically Organizing", "Professionally Organizing". In

democratic politics caste plays a role. In election, vote banks are essentially caste based. Political parties chose their caste candidates who invariably belong to the numerically dominant caste in the constituency concerned.

Generally speaking, the usual yardstick for the political parties, among others, is the caste factor in arriving at a political, democratic decision on issues arising now and then. When caste becomes politically important as a kind of democratic tool, its role in politics may open new dimensions for it. It may organize itself into a new force to be contended with. It will not be a single force; it will be many forces - as many as there are castes. The social order of caste is full of innumerable castes, each one independent and homogenous within; all inter-dependent; though of unequal relationship; yet functioning in harmony of interests; maintaining harmony as long as caste-interests are not opposed to one another. Only when inter-dependence becomes wafer-thin and harmony difficult to achieve, between castes, relations are strained. The intensity of caste conflicts depends on the degree of hierarchy and inequality, intensity of oppression and suppression and pain of stress and strain.

On the one hand, caste is a divisive force as it is rigid and inflexible, and hence undemocratic. On the other, it is a unifying force as the system is kept intact. It is so in rural areas as the people are bound by its rules and regulations. The regionally concentrated communities preserve the cultural potentiality of the people. For example, the Nattu Kottai Chettiars, also known as the Nagarathars who are culturally rich, have maintained their social and religious traditions and life-styles. The Chettiyar heritage is a documentation of the Chettiyar Legacy and the social, economic and cultural aspects of their life. The elaborately carved brackets and tapered pillars made of Burma teak and Satin Wood in the 125-year old house in Kuliparai; sculpted pillars in the Ilayathangudi; ancient pillars in the Ariyakudi Perumal Temple; and the tall and fierce guardians of the Ayyanar temple at Palaiyur near Kanadakathan are the sources of immense beauty and inspiration and also the spectacular marks of the architectural splendour. Other such regionally prominent communities do have such heritage to boast about. Such a system with all its defects, valiant, imposing, unalterable and living has become, of late, the springboard for the emergence of caste organizations.

Caste Organizations

The rise of caste organizations in Tamil Nadu is a modern trend, particularly in the last few years. The mushroom growth of caste organizations in recent years has made the democratic polity get congested and hence, complications are likely to arise in future. These organizations are not harping on high-and-low (by birth) syndrome. Though conscious of the reality of the unequal castes they are not, for the present, likely to precipitate a crisis on account of social inequality. They are evidently not interested in abolition of caste system as they argue that caste-abolition is not possible. That castes can be treated equally and thus, equalization of castes is a practical approach has become the ideological viewpoint of these organizations.

In a democratic society, personal liberty, individual rights and equality of opportunities are upheld. This applies equally to groups of people formed into different caste organizations. What individuals demand in their individual capacity groups claim through their caste organizations. Apparently the demands are the same. While the individual struggles are painful, the caste-organizations struggles are heroic. The former struggle is unnoticed while the latter attracts the public eye. Caste-individuals can join more easily their caste-organizations than the political parties. Similarly, caste-organizations can be built more easily with homogenous groups than political parties with heterogeneous groups.

Their Evolution

Before independence, during several decades, there were caste-organizations of the lower castes, oppressed communities and even of a few backward castes. Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy and other self respecters have addressed their conferences and stood in support of their demands for certain concessions. These organizations were not caste-biased because they did not cross swords with upper castes. Later, some of lower communities above the depressed classes formed their caste-organizations only to ventilate their grievances and ask for certain benefits. In fact, these caste formations of the oppressed and the socially and educationally backward were few and far between, and they were not aggressive or vociferous or demonstrative.

With the rise of Periyar and his self-respect movement, the non-Brahmins were united against the Brahmins. The caste distinctions within the

non-Brahmin community as well as Brahmin were apparently erased. These were some caste organizations representative of the depressed classes and some lower, backward Sudras, which did not precipitate any further proliferations. Only after Periyar's death, during the 1970's caste-organizations began to multiply, with Brahmins forming first their caste-organizations and the non-Brahmin communities - both the upper and lower sutra-castes - following their footsteps right royally!

Reasons for the rise of Caste Organiszations

The political parties fight among themselves. They don't fight on issues, their clashes center around personalities, not enemies, they don't fight for the sake of the people's welfare. People have lost their faith on political parties, which have become undependable.

Corruption and bribery are rampant in the democratic polity. The opportunism, nepotism and favouritism of the political leaders whose interest have stood above public interests and who have become inaccessible to the people have alienated from the people who have elected them.

This alienation of the people has become total with the political leaders switching over from the circle of the people to the company of gundas and criminals. With gundas and criminals around, they have criminalized politics, using them against the people themselves besides using them in eliminating their political enemies.

Naturally the people, helpless as they were, turned around seeking solace, security and protection and found their own caste to be their natural allies which were very familiar to them, through their marriages, family functions and temple festivals. Democratic parties became deceptive, since caste organizations are becoming real in the people's estimate, this is a negative trend though!

The British imperialists left India. India became a democratic republic. It was said that the Indian people have given themselves the constitution, a secular and socialist one. Five decades passed. Population has doubled, even trebled and parliamentary elections were periodically held. Party governments functioned, economic planning was done. In spite of all these processes, India

did not change. Poverty was becoming large, unemployment was mounting up. Competition in the labour market is severe, where political parties have failed, caste as an institution can be a safety value, a protector of its members against poverty, squalor and unemployment. People felt that caste, being a long-standing institution close to them, could provide some safety, security and protection against the ills of society which the political parties have failed to solve.

The Consitutional guarantee of reservation in education and jobs for the SCs, STs and BCs was catalystic enough to induce each caste to clamour for its inclusion in the list of BCs and MBCs. The leading members of each community thought they should not miss the bus. They organized their castes into a sort of Union, Association, Peravai or Sangam and even registered them. It was felt that it was, unlike political parties, easier to organize caste sangams. The best means to fulfil the aspirations of the people to awaken them and to create awareness among them was to use caste dimension.

Conveniently convincing themselves that caste cannot be abolished, caste members, especially the prominent persons there, rationalized the functioning of castes and argued that at the most the caste harmony is achievable through equalization of castes which may be propagated through caste sangams. This may be, in a sense, a practical way out.

In a democratic set up, men with ambition may be yearning for high, attractive, prestigious positions such as those of legislators, parliamentarians and ministers. In a declining democracy where men come up to these positions by hook or crook, ambitious men may choose the easiest way of achieving such honours. Forming caste sangams is currently the easiest way to fulfil one's political ambition.

Today the political trend is that no single party could form the government, has been a fillip to castes forming their own sangams with their politcal outfits.

Strategy of Caste Sangams

In a caste syndrome, multiplicity of castes, numerically bigger and smaller castes, hierarchy of upper and lower castes, regional concentration of castes and scattered castes may result in a horrible congestion of caste sangams and their joining in the political highways of Democracy. In this congestion and

jamming many, many tiny sangams may be crushed and some may wither away. Strategically speaking only the numerically bigger castes may be so assertive that other surviving ones may coalesce with them. Upper caste sangams may be eased out. The Sangams of the depressed classes, which could be the engine of social revoultion, would struggle and survive.

Strategically speaking, the numerically stronger and regionally concentrated castes forming their own caste-sangams would form a grand alliance apparently on the basis of a common feature, a pervasive virtue in them. Similarly the depressed classes may form a combine on the basis of common features and virtues among them. A study of the history of the castes and their practices may bring out the binding features and cultural virtues of caste groups. In this process the smaller castes as well as the upper castes which are also numerically small may be eased out into the bigger ones. Marriage, education and employment would facilitate this dilution and merger. This may be a blessing in disguise of caste organisations.

The other side of the picture is somewhat gloomy. The BC-MBC alliance and the SC-ST alliance are likely to aggressively compete for power sharing with the dominant political parties in the state. They may also compete in the promotional fields of education, employment, industry, economic betterment etc. If this could be the competition on the promotional side, there is likely to be a direct, even physical and violent clash between them in the burning issues of untouchability, feudal overlordship and labour exploitation.

The third dimension is the likelihood of radical changes in power structure following the electoral challenges of caste-alliances and combines posed to political parties. Power sharing is the open, ultimate goal of caste alliances. The strategy of each of the dominant political parties would be to drive out the other ones in power game and absorb the caste groups into its fold and digest them.

These views expressed above may be critically analysed in the light of brief case studies of Thondaimandala vellala Mudaliars sangam (representing the non-Brahmin upper caste); of kongu vellala gounders peravai (representing the non-Brahmin backward caste); of Arundathiars (representing the Depressed classes.)

CASE STUDY-1

SEKHIZHAR EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL SOCIETY (SECK)

HISTORY

The affiliate to Sekhizhar Educational and Cultural Kazhagam (SECK) is Thondai Mandala Vellala Mudaliar Sangam (TMVMS). The forming of SECK matured on a day when 500 and more relatives arranged for a dinner in honour of two prominent members of the Thondai Mandala Mudaliar (TMM) caste-one, a retired Supreme Court Judge and the other a lady of prominence in social work. The SECK was born on 9-6-1974 with pujas performed in Sekizhar Perumal temple. The Kazhagam's aims are to unite the TMM's, to serve their interests and to make them accept and follow the divine leadership of Gnana Peedam Kanchi Gnanaprakasar Thirumadam.

An interesting event occured in July 1977, when a secret attempt was made to induct an undeserving person as Head of the Thondamandala Adhenam Mutt. He had no educational attainments, no inclination towards saiva religion and he did not belong to TMM community. If this induction would have happened, the TNMs would have lost their links with the Mutt which along with it, accumulated property worth several crores of rupees would have been lost and all the benefits accruing to the community would be lost. After much efforts and following talks to the government, the Kazhagam was able to retain the route for its own community.

Ten years after the starting of the SECK in 1974, a monthly magazine of Sehizhar was brought out in July 1984. Apart from the details about the community, this magazine carries articles on Sehizhar and his literary creations and articles relating to Appar, Sundarar, Manickavasagar and Thiru GnanaSambandar. And it also contains details about the programs the community undertakes for the welfare and progress of the commnuity. State level conferences were held in 1979 and then in 1982.

Importance

Being an upper caste non-Brahmin community, the TMMs were able to occupy many high offices on account of the implementation of communal reservation right from the days of the Justice party and also due to merit which they acquired over time. Here is given a list of high offices, which the commnuity acquired over a period up to this day.

Chief Ministers	- 3
Ministers	- 8
Speakers	- 1
Dy. Chairman (Madras Legislative Council)	- 1
Madras Mayor	- 1
Supreme Court Judge	- 1
Padma Shri	- 4
Sahitya Academy Prize Winner	- 1
Vice Chancellors	- 5
State Public Service Commission Members	- 2
Chief Engineers	-18
CE in the UNO	- 2
Director & Technical Education	- 2
Doctor receiving Dr. B.C.Roy's Award	- 1
IPS	- 4
IFS	- 2
IRS	- 2

The list is not exhaustive.

Service

There are two important institutional arrangements which the TMM Sangam made benefiting the poor, deserving boys in pursuing their education and creating opportunities for suitable arrangements of marriage alliances of the girls and boys of marriageable age in the community.

Kottur Arangaswamy Mudaliyar estate hostel was started more than 50 years ago at Mannarkudi, Thanjavur Dr. Kottur Arangaswamy Mudaliar formed a trust transferring all his property to the trust. The aim was to provide food and accomodation facilities in the free hostel to the poor boys of the community. The caste youth accommodated in this hostel studied in different schools. During the 1940s, the students in the hostel were more than 120. Now it has fallen to 20. Its impact on the community was not much. Infact for some years the hostel was not functioning. With schools springing everywhere and with several welfare schemes being implemented by the government, the Mudaliar hostel was not able to attract many caste youth. There was probably lack of leadership in the community and hence no modernization, no creation of awareness among the poor parents of the community.

In recent years, the S.E.C.K. organized a very creative programme called Mandala meet which had been held for 7 or 8 times in different towns. In this meet, parents will participate with copies of horoscopes of their wards and they would bring their boys and girls for the meet. Several marriage alliances were made.

Another programme the Kazhagam has undertaken is to collect data on those who have attained the age of 80 and above, and to evolve a scheme to provide facilities to them. It seems that it is still in the process. The organization has taken up several welfare schemes to help the youth, women and other deserving poor in the community.

CASE STUDY - II

KONGU VELLALA GOUNDER PERAVAIs

The kongu vellala gounders called as kongu vellalas are the regionally concentrated Community. They claim that they belong to kongu country. Like other communities they are also proud of their origin. The kongu vellalas claim that they are a great people right from Sangam age. Kongu Nadu includes Kovai, Erode, Dharmapuri, Salem, Namakkal, Karur, Thiruchi, Dindugal and Theni districts. It is one fifth of Tamilnadu.

In Sangam literature there are references to kongunadu and their people. (Pathupattu, Ettuthogai). Kings like Athai, Adhiaman, Aai, Thoyan, Maran, Otrai, Ori, Kumaran, Kodomudi, Nalli, Nannan etc. had ruled from kongunadu. Five out of seven last Sangam Vellalas belong to kongu. There were about 20 kongu "pulava"s in Madurai sangam. There was kongu pulavar sabai which developed Tamil. The kongu Vellar wrote "Kongu Vel Ma Kadhai" lived in Vijayamangalam. Adiyarkunallar who wrote commentaries on Silappadigaram was born in Kongu nadu (Nirambai). In Kongu country there are 58 kulams or Kootams. Thus the kongu Vellalas are proud of their country called Kongu Nadu and their kings who ruled their country. They are also proud of tracing their origin from Sangam age. They like associating themselves with Thavathiru Santhalingar Thirumadam, Perur Adheenam Ilayapattam; and Kumaragurupara Swamigal, Madathipathi Gowmara Madhalayam near Kovai.

Their Services

"Pannayam Kattuvadu" has been an age old practice in land. A land owner will engage agricultural labourers for one year. He will give them advance money. The contract is for one year. After completing the work, they are allowed to move to other fields or they may move to other areas, they need not repay the excess amount remaining with them. They will be provided with food and other requirements. They can take their own cattlestock to graze in the fields of their owners. Both the owner and agricultural labourers jointly operate the farming - whether gainful or painful. The agricultural labourers enjoyed several facilities in the fields and they were free labour, not bonded labour. There was traditionally an understanding between Kongu Vellala land owners and the Arunthathiars who worked in the land as agricultural labour. This is called even today a, Pannayam Kattuvadu.

Their marriage functions at home are the ideal example of how the Brahmnical rituals could be set aside. Their marriages are coducted by their own caste men called Arumaikkarars. Arumaikkarar is a respectable person of that locacity who hands over the 'Yellow thread' to the bride groom which is tied around the neck of the bride. Periyar had admired the Kongu Vellala marriage. In modernity, with the infiltration of brahmanic culture, ceremony and rituals, as the Kongu Vellalas families grew rich, they started performing their marriages

with Brahmin purohits in the morning while they continued Arrumaikkarars" tradition during the previous night. As Nadars, the Kongu Vellalas are also becoming Sanskritised. Only the upper castes were Brahmanised and Sanskritised. It is yet to be seen whether Kongu Vellala Peravai would stop this Brahmanic infiltration into their age-old marriage tradition.

Their demands and their Strategy

The Kongu Vellala Gounders Peravai had so far 4 state-level conferences. According to the late Kovai Chezhian (the most popular Kongu Leader who had his training in Periyar movement) had stated:-

* We are not short sighted to funcion within our own community.

* Only after seeing other communities forming their caste organizations we started our own.

* For the last 45 years, our organization was not used against any other community nor was it used to provoke caste clashes

* The BCs should join together. Sometime back we formed a federation of backward Communities, 69 castes joined it.

They demand that they should be included in the MBC list. Why? Out of 50% reservation for the BCs., 20% reservation was taken apart for the MBCs, the benefit of which went largely to a particular large community which was declared MBC. Only when 30% reservation remained for BCs, the large BC, namely, Kongu Vellalars lost much of their share. Hence they demand their inclusion in the MBC list.

Their demands include that the census should be taken with reference to each caste as reservation is to be based on its population ratio; that the laws banning untouchability should not be misused vindictively against the BCs. There are 7 demands made on behalf of the Kongu Community, three of which for the sake of other communities; 23 demands relating to economic situations out, which 11 related to KonguNadu.

The Kongu Peravai is the only caste organization, which demands a separate state within the union, namely, Kongu Nadu, So, it has created its political wing called Kongu Nadu Makkal Katchi (KonguNadu People's

Party - KNPP). The KNPP tries to justify the carving out a separate state of Kongu Nadu by giving arguments - a) Enlarging development programmes; smaller state; rise of new leaders; neat and corruption free administration; It seems to be a dream as Tamil nationalism is rising up.

The Kongu Vellala Peravai has brought into unity among all caste - organizations on the basis of the commonality of "Vellala". Caste confiicts may perhaps be averted this way. The future may face a situation in which all BCs are under one coordination and all SCs and STs under another coordination. The Brahmanic and upper castes may play a role to retain their hegemony and privileges while the confronation between the BCs and depressed classes persist. Neither the coordinating of BCs, nor the coming together of SCs and STs could bring about social equality. It is only through efforts to abolish the caste system as a whole that social cohesion and social equality could be achieved. The Brahmanic and upper caste monopoly should be done away with if equality is to be achieved on a permanent basis.

CASE STUDY - III

ARUNDATHIARS

Origin

Arundathiars as a community had several names - Madika, Madari, Pahadai, Chakkili, etc. They demand that they should be called as "Arundathiar" only and this correction should be entered in the Gazatteer of the Government. There are several leaders in the community, but there is no unity among them.

Ezhil Illangovan has studied deeply about this community which he belongs to and written a small, authentic book, "Arundathiar History - Questions and Explanatory Answers". There are several reference books such as Prof. N. Vanamamalai's "Muthupattan Kathai", Prof Ko. Kesavan's, "Dalit Liberation and the Depressed classes" and Chenko Varadarajan's "West Tamilzaga Folk Literature - A study" and also Silambu N. Selvaraj; "Madurai Veeran - some facts from the point of view of Human Studies and Sociology". Their magazines are "Ina Muzhakkam", "Ina Unarvu", "Urimai Kural".

The feudal king (Kuru Nila Mannargal) who ruled Tamilnadu were called "Velvi". One section of Velir was called "Adiyar". They ruled from "Thagadur" which is today in Dharmapuri region. Arundathiars belong to the clan called "Adiyar Kudi".

Etymologically speaking, "Arumai Pournthia Adiyar" changed into "Arundathiar". "Ma Adiyar" changed into "Madiyar", Which is another name of Arundathiar. They belong to Kurunchi region consisting of hills and mountains and plains. Thagadur ruler, "Adiyaman" was Arundathiars ancestor.

The Sangam poets are Okkur Masathi, Masathiar, and Masathanar. Arundathi girls of south Tamilnadu have these names - Masathi, Madathi, Madat-thi.

The Arundathiars argue that they are the pure Tamil, in fact, the earliest Tamil. They are not Nayakkars. They are by race, language and nationality the Tamil only. They argue that they are not Chakkiliars. This name was wantonly imposed on them. In music, they are using musical instruments, which belong to Tamil Isai. They also say their New Year Day is the first day of Tamil month "Thai". So, culturally and through their Arts, they are the Tamil only.

Their ideas

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar and Periyar E.V.Ramasamy are their ideological gurus. Madurai Veeran is their ideal God. Their views about the Caste system, Aryans, Conventions and Traditions are categories. According to them, caste should be abolished. Human society should be based on perfect equality. They consider the Aryans to be responsible for the caste system. They oppose all day-to-day practices affecting the self-respect of the community.

The Arundathiars treat Madurai Veeran with great reverence. The upper caste factions are intolerant enough to twist the history and separate Madurai Veeran from the community. Ezhil Ilangovan in his book on Arundathiar has elaborately narrated the story of Madurai Veeran. However, the Arundathiars believe in revolution and in casteless, classless society.

The reservation policy, no doupt, has paid a rich dividend as far as the backward, most backward and the depressed classes in Tamil Nadu are concerned. It has enabled countless number of students of these communities to have access to higher education in the aided and Government educational institutions in the State. Job reservations benefited several thousands of men and women of these classes and enabled them to occupy better positions in the government, bureaucracy and ultimately in the society. This occupational mobility and the resultant socio-economic changes in the social life of the people in the towns, cities and the metropolitan areas threw the caste hierarchy, which still acts as a barrier to equality in rural areas, out of gear in almost all urban achieved areas. In this respect the reservation policy achieved better results in Tamil Nadu. An empirical study on the beneficial effects of the reservation policy will only prove the tremendous social and economic changes that it has brought in the life of the backward classes in the State. It is because of this development that no political party dare talk in the State against the 69 percent reservation followed in Tamil Nadu. They would lose their popularity if they opposed it and gain advantage by supporting the cause of social justice. Under this background it would be difficult to talk about ending the reservation policy in the near future. The eminent Sociologist Andrè Beteille forecasts this a decade ago. His writings and some other Sociologists who attempt to criticize the reservation policy on the plank of efficiency in administration have only proved their intellectual acumen and scholarship but not convinced the masses that want it and support it. Therefore the purpose of this paper is not to go into the details of the merits and demerits of the reservation policy and its efficacy. But an attempt is made in the second part of this paper to throw some light on the origin and the growth of caste associations in relation to it and the struggle for equality in Tamil Nadu.

Existence of Caste Groups

To the question of which started first whether the reservation system or the formation of caste groups and caste associations, we have evidences to say that caste groups and caste associations appeared first. The British exploited them to serve their purpose. Researchers have brought to light the prevalence of them, social closures in the pre-modern Indian society operated by the caste system, which enabled the higher castes to establish their dominance and supremacy over the lower castes. It helped them to keep themselves on top of

the society and extract the necessary services rendered by the latter. Sometimes the higher castes formed alliances and established close co-operation among them to maintain their hold on social and religious matters in the society. Burton Stein reports the existence of this nexus between the Brahmins and the respectable cultivating castes in certain areas of South India as early as the 14th century A.D.[2]. The concept of purity and pollution also enabled the higher castes to maintain their unique status in the society. The existence of caste groups under such social circumstances was a natural phenomenon.

Caste rivalry, an important feature exploited by the British to play politics, that existed in Tamil Nadu between the Right Hand and Left Hand caste groups from the 11th Century A.D. till the 18th Century also led to the consolidation of caste groups and birth of caste associations[3]. It kept caste consciousness active on religious grounds and led to claims and counter claims which finally resulted in a dispute in the city of Madras as early as 1809[4].

Caste Unity under Conflict Situation

Caste unity developed in a conflict situation where a particular caste was dominant and established its supremacy. Protest against caste arrogance and monopoly took place in such situations. This protest movement started slowly and became increasingly popular from the later part of the 19th century. The British administration assisted this process by various means and the enactment of the Caste Removal Disabilities Act, 1850 was one of such acts. A feeling of insecurity made the miniority caste or castes to maintain a close co-operation among them, which ultimately resulted in the formation of virulent caste associations. A typical example of this can be understood from the Nadar movement in the southern part of Tamil Nadu during the beginning decades of the 19th Century. The rise of Nadars in these areas was due to the spread of education, missionary activity and growth of trade. Christian Missionaries were responsible for providing them with education and converting a large portion of them to Christianity through a mass movement. The new economic opportunities and growth of trade under the British rule had led some of them to migrate to Ramnad and Madurai areas. They established trade centres in these places and as minority community realised the strength of unity. It made them to come closer by the 1820's through a tightly knit system called, 'the Uravinmurai'. It

ensured their protection and advancement[5]. The fear of hostility of the majority Marava community in these areas created a conflict situation that resulted in their further consolidation. The increase in their wealth and power as traders and moneylenders made them to claim higher status as Kshatriyas in the society, second only to the Brahmins. Later, they entered into a serious confrontation with the Maravas in their effort to enter the temples hitherto forbidden to them and began to seek interactional recognition. The earliest confrontation took place in 1874 when they attempted to enter the Meenakshi temple at Madurai. They made similar attempt at Kalugumalai in 1895 that resulted in a riot. The culmination of these attempts was the Sivakasi riots which took place in 1899[6].

Emergence of Interest Groups and Publication of Census - an Impetus to Growth of Caste Associations

Synchronizing the birth of the Nadar movement in southern Tamil Nadu, politics in the Madras Province around Fort St. George came to be conducted from 1870's in such a way as to promote interest groups and communalism. There appeared lobbying bodies for the merchants, the zamindars, the tenants, the cattle breeders, the Hindus and the Nairs[7]. They began to solidify into permanent political associations also.

The publication of 1881 Census gave an impetus to the growth of caste associations. For it produced an outrage among certain caste groups whose Varna classifications were not consistent with their local status positions. It made them to form caste associations to represent their claims that were tactically encouraged by the British administration[8]. C.J. Baker concurs with the view of David Washbrook in this regard and expresses the opinion, "that the Madras Government began to show itself from the later part of the 19th Century that it was increasingly ready to listen to political petitions couched in the language of caste, and to distribute government favours with atleast one eye on caste considerations"[9].

Race for Status and Caste Associations

Thus by the close of the 19th Century, causes like spread of education, educational concessions such as half-fee and scholarships given to certain caste groups, improvement in the economic status due to growth of trade and wider

social perception led to the development of a new atmosphere in Tamil Nadu in which each caste began to have an identity for itself and tried to introspect about its historical linkages and its histroical past. It made them to claim either higher status in the society in order to have interactional recognition or backward status in the society to get educational concessions offered by the British Government. For instance, the Nadars claimed Kshatriya status, the Komatis in the Northern Circars put forward their right to perform Vaishya ceremonies, the Kammalans (the artisans) in the same area claimed recognition as Brahmins and in Madurai the wealthy Sourashtra silk weavers wanted privileges like that of Gujarathi Brahmins [10].

Proliferation of Caste Associations - Causes

Therefore the early decades of the 20th Century witnessed the proliferation of caste associations, in addition to the interest groups, in the Madras Province. Their growth continued due to several reasons. According to M.N. Srinivas the implementation of several schemes by the British administration for the improvement of communication and transport, railways, canals and roads broadened the linkages of trade and social intercourse. And the emergence of new towns and cities, which became centres of economic, administrative and educational activities led to the integration of previously demobilised communities together[11]. The publication of the 1881 Census, as it has already been pointed out, accelerated the race for status claim. Further, in 1892 the Madras Government allowed pupils of certain specified communities to get admission free from fee to all elementary schools. It granted them and to pupils of other backward or indigent classes half-fee concession in the secondary schools and colleges under public management[12]. This role of the British administration as a great dispenser of patronage and benevolence had an effect on caste associations. Each group tried to have an association in order to present a petition to the Government. They demanded the inclusion of their caste in the list of backward classes for purposes of Government employment. Later they started to insist upon social justice or equality in treatment. From then onwards the number of castes included in the list of backward classes began to swell every decade from a mere 11 in 1883 to 323 in 1988 and even beyond that till today[13]. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909 which initiated the process of democratization of political institutions and conceded, for the first time, the demand

of the Muslim League for separate electorates gave the idea to the other caste groups to maintain their identity and claim the right of representation[14]. These complex reasons were responsible for the growth of about dozen caste associations in Tamil Nadu in the early decades of the 20th Century.

The Vanniya Sangam appeared in 1886. The Komatis, who were engaged mostly in trade and money lending and who claimed the Vaishya status, founded the Arya Vaishya Maha Sabha in 1907. They negotiated with the Government on matters affecting their commercial interests[15]. The Devanga Weavers of Salem and Coimbatore and the Vaniya or Oil pressers of North Arcot adopted this Komati model of caste integration. In South Malabar, a few members of the leading Nambudri familes, who were dissatisfied with their traditional status, organised a 'Nambudri Yogashema' in 1908 to discuss the ways and means to alter the educational policy of their community. They petitioned the Madras Government for the establishment of English medium schools in their areas [16]. The Naidu Sangam was set up in the Madras City in 1910. The Nadar confrontation with the Maravas in the South and their self-consciousness as a community made them to assert themselves as a solid caste and maintain their self-respect. In 1902 they instructed their women in Nanguneri taluk not to carry head loads and wear beads. Finally, they formed the Nadar Mahajana Sangam in 1910 and its first conference was held at Poraiyar in the same year [17]. The birth of the non-Brahmin movement accelerated the growth of caste associations. Between 1910 and 1930 intense conferences were organized by different non-Brahmin castes throughout India[18].

Multifarious Activities of the Caste Associations

Initially these caste associations addressed themselves to social reform within the caste and sought to secure a better position for their castes in the wider society [19]. For instance, the agents of the newly formed Nadar Sangam went into the villages to organise their caste men. They set up Panchayats for settling disputes within the community and between the Nadars and other communities. They formed co-operative banks through which they provided aid to their caste men to start business and industry. Slowly they set up schools and colleges. Priority was shown in these institutions to their community students

during admissions as in the case of minority Christian and Muslim institutions. They also started the practice of awarding scholarships to worthy students of their community to encourage them to pursue their studies. In their effort to promote the welfare of their caste people they sought the protection of the British Raj and their association pledged its loyalty to the King and support to the Justice Party, which controlled politics in the Madras Presidency during the 1920's[20]. The concrete outcome of these efforts was the set up of a College at Virudhunagar in 1947 under the name Senthil Kumara Nadar College. A Women's College and a Polytechnic were also set up in that place. This educational activity undertaken by the caste associations is an emulating model of the Christian Missionaries and the Muslim community. For there existed and continue to exist even today many Schools and Colleges in Tamil Nadu under the management of the Christian community [21]. Similarly, the Muslims, the Punjabis or Sikhs, the Jains, the Brahmins, the Komatis or Arya Vaishyas, the Naidus, the Nadars, the Mudaliars, the Kongu Vellalas, the Yadavas, the Vanniyas and even the Devendrakula Vellala also have set up Schools and Colleges under the control and management of their caste men [22]. Besides them there are also colleges managed by a combination of certain advanced communities[23]. Interestingly it is difficult to point out any college or educational institution set up and managed by the Dalits or the Harijans or the smaller communities in the State. This also necessitates the continuance of the reservation policy in order to constantly encourage the educational advancement of these people. The Constitutional protection under Articles 29 and 30 in the Fundamental Rights is certainly taken advantage of by the economically well-placed communities to set up educational institutions under minority status. It is for the Sanskrit Sociologists or the Subaltern Sociologists, to examine in a braod perspective, the implications of these educational activities of the caste associations and the perpetuation of caste consciousness through them. It is a different story that at the present junction that some of the self-financing educational institutions set up by different communities and individuals are becoming highly commercial in admitting the students. But still educational institutions set up by caste associations do exercise considerable influence among the castes and do provide education not only to their own community students but also to the students of other communities who live in their vicinity. Some caste associations have set up hostels, which also facilitated the education of their caste pupils. A free

hostel exists for the Mudaliar boys at Vellore. Similarly, the Vanniya Kula Kshatriya Hostel (VKK Hostel) at Vellore helped many Vanniya boys to come up in life. Caste associations also started the practice of awarding scholarships to poor but bright students of their castes. For example, the Nadar Sangam awarded from 1921 till 1964 scholarships worth Rupees 4,00,000 to more than 3000 students[24]. Similarly, the Tuluva Vellala Assoication awards scholarships to the poor and deserving Mudaliar boys and girls to pursue their studies. It also conducted a Swayamvara marriage which the poor unmarried girls were able to get their life partners. These multifarious activities of the caste associations promoted free and easy interaction and helped to remove the feeling of insecurity among the economically poor within each caste. Their work also inspired them to take part in the social events on an equal footing. Caste associations fostered competition in education and jobs, created status consciousness and brought advancement of their castes equal to the advancement of the higher castes. However a considerable number of caste groups of the lower status were not economically comfortable to play these roles.

To sum up they had endeavoured to 1) gain self-respect of their castes; 2) get educational benefits; 3) provide welfare to the community; 4) get due share in the matter of politics and public appointments; 5) raise the economic status of their castes and finally 6) secure equality in the society. These they had achieved by protest, aggression, confrontation, conflict, capturing political power and through social, religious, economic and educational services. If they continue to do these good acts, by keeping themselves off from creating communal disharmony, it will definitely lead to good social progress.

II

Reservation System and Struggle for Equality

The Macaulayan system of education, introduced in India from 1835, was based on the Darwinian doctrine of the struggle for existence by which those who had benefitted from it were the fittest to survive. It was designed to produce western educated graduates who would cater to the needs of an expanding bureaucracy under the British administration. It gave rise to a class of Government officials, managers and professionals who became the "influential class" in the Indian society[25]. This class consisted predominantly of the

numerically minority community, the Brahmins, who were the traditional literate class in the Varna bound Indian society. The majority non-Brahmins, who held the sword, trade and plough for several centuries, were lagging behind in taking advantage of it and became the "alienated class". The influential class often allegedly used their official position to employ and promote their own men wherever it was possible. This made the Board of Revenue of the Madras Government issue a Standing Order No 128 (2), as early as 1851, to distribute public appointments among various communities and prevent the members of the same community occupying them[25]. Several members of this class became later as prominent politicians, lawyers and administrators and as such, role model for others. By the close of the 19th Century there was a realisation on the part of the non-Brahmins that they were overtaken in all fields by the Brahmins. They began to develop a fear which became an alarming one due to the obvious fact that India had a purely bureaucratic form of Government with little democratic control. More number of Brahmins dominating politics and the civil services meant more power and financial security in their hands which could be used to prevent the non-Brahmins gaining equality in politics and society.

The Justice Party and Demand for Reservations

The British policy of introducing seperate electorates for the Muslim community in India since 1909 had a profound effect on the Indian society. The non-Brahmin movement, which crystalized into a political party in 1916 with the birth of the Justice Party, began to demand the reservation of electoral seats for the backward classes prior to the inauguration of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms. Because it believed in the principle that without equal political power to each and every community in a caste ridden Indian society, there could be no economic and social Justice. Therefore, when it came to power it wanted the distribution of administrative appointments among the various castes and communities, including the Christians, Mohammedans and the Depressed Classes. It resulted in the issue of two Communal Government Orders in 1921 and 1922[26]. The contents of these Orders were nothing more in importance than the earlier Revenue Board Standing Order No.128 (2). But they directed the district administration to send return once a year to the Government on the distribution of public appointments among the various communities. These Orders did not work effectively as British Governor had no interest in them.

It was only in 1927 communal representation began to work. S.Muthaiah Mudaliar brought in that year another Government Order. It aimed at introducing proportional representation in matters of appointments to Government positions on communal basis. Even that G.O. had to face the hurdles created by Rajaji in 1937 and Prakasam in 1946 in its implementation. They thwarted the interests of the Backward Classes by not giving much importance to the reservation system. This could be understood from the fact of increased Brahmin presence in the Government Office in the Madras Province during 1930 to 1940. The Brahmins who constituted 3 per cent of population occupied 38 per cent of the Gazetted Officers posts, the non-Brahmins with 70 per cent of population occupied 21 to 26 per cent and the Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and the Depressed Classes occupied the rest of the posts. Similarly, out of the total non-Gazetted Officers posts with the salary of Rs.100 and above the Brahmins occupied 45 to 51 per cent, the non-Brahmins 29 to 35 per cent and the others the rest of the posts[27].

After independence, the Madras Government passed another Order on 21 November 1947 to follow communal reservation in matters of appointment to public offices. But the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru directed Omandur Ramasamy, who was then the Premier of the Province, to take efforts not to implement the G.O.Omandur Ramasamy refused to touch that Government Order fearing that it would agitate the minds of a large section of the backward classes. Therefore, he earned the name from the Congressmen of that day as "Ramasamy without beard". Periyar E.V.Ramasamy with beard, who founded the Dravidar Kazhagam, emerged as a strong protagonist of the reservation policy.

Constitution of India and the Supreme Court's Stand On the Reservation Issue

The issue of social equality caught the imagination of the Constitutional framers in 1949. Dr.Ambedkar dramatized its importance in the Constituent Assembly. He said, "India was going to enter into a life of contradiction, granting political equality but continuing social and economic inequality with the possible consequence that those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which the Assembly has so laboriously built up". What he prophesied turned to be true during the 1980's when there was demand for the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in their true spirit.

First Constitutional Amendment

The Supreme Court of India had struck down in 1951 the Communal Government Order that was in force in the Madras State. It pointed out the violation of the Constitutional guarantee of equality before the eyes of law and equal opportunities to all in a case involving Chambakam Durairajan. Since the Dravidian Movement and its leaders considered the reservation system as an important instrument to bring social equality of the vast majority of Backward Classes population in the State, there was an intense agitation for the continuance of the reservation system. It resulted in the inclusion of Article 15 (4) in the Constitution of India through the First Constitutional Amendment in1951. It envisages that the socially and educationally backward classes would be identified, their difficulties removed and their condition improved in terms of Article 340 (1) read with Article 15 (4). Article 15 (4) reads, "Nothing in this article or in Clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Citizens (SEBCs) or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes "[28] In this context it is worth to mention here that Jawarlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, did not agree to the suggestion of including the term "economically " backward in the place of "socially and educationally backward" classes. The Parliament was informed that the expression backward classes meant "nothing else but a collection of certain castes"[29]. After the Constitutional Amendment, the Government of Madras issued a Government Order on 27th September 1951 with regard to the reservation system. According to it, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had a reservation of 15 per cent and the Backward Classes had the reservation of 25 per cent and the rest was open to all other communities[30]. It was again revised in 1956 after the Reorganisation of the States. According to it, reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes became 16 per cent and the Open Competition quota was reduced by 1 per cent[31]. The First Backward Classes Commission, appointed by the Government of India, headed by Kaka Kalelkar also came to the conculsion in its Report of 1955 that in considering social and educational backwarkness among the Hindus the reality of caste could not be ignored[32]. Therefore, the State administration in Madras continued the reservation system on caste basis. After independence, the State had the reservation of 16 per cent for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and 25 per cent for the Backward Classes.

Increase in Reservation

In 1971, the D.M.K. Government under the Chief Ministership of M.Karunanidhi increased the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservations to 18 per cent and the Backward Classes reservation to 31 percent on the basis of the recommendations of A.N.Sattanathan Commision, which was appointed in 1969 [33]. The total reservation in the State was within 50 per cent. The aim of the D.M.K. Government was to help the large number of socially and educationally backward communities to get admission in educational institutions and enter Government services. Yet it did not bring the desired result, as there was clandestine upliftment of the upper castes by the minority run educational institutions and the private sector employment market. The employment opportunities in the Government sector has been roughly from 2 to 3 per cent compared to the private sector employment opportunities. Morever the upper castes were able to dominate the Central Government services where there was no reservation for the Backward classes. For example a study conducted in 1971 by V.Subramaniam in his **Social Background of India's Adminstrators** reveals the fact that the 4 per cent Brahmin population in India were able to get 21.53 per cent of IFS positions between 1947 and 1963, 36.32 per cent of IAS, 31.44 per cent of IPS and not lower than 35 per cent of other Central Services [34]. The Mandal Commission Report (1980) made a startling revelation on the dominance of the upper castes in the Central Government Services. According to its statistics, "the Forward Castes were estimated at 25.2 per cent of the population made of 78.34 per cent of the employees of Central Ministries and Departments, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes were 16.83 per cent and the Backward Castes were 4.83 per cent. In class I, these figures were 90.23 per cent for "the forward castes", 7.18 per cent for the "Scheduled Communities" and 2.59 per cent for "the Other Backward Classes"[35]. Though the reservation system had provided some scope for the Backward Classes at the State level its absence at the Central level left them hopelessly behind the forward castes. The demand for reservation assumed all India character. It continued until V.P.Singh's Government made a historic decision. He was responsible for the issue of a Central Government Order on 13 August 1990 reserving 27 per cent posts in the services of Central Government and Public Sector undertakings for the Other Socially and Educationally Backward

Classes. It was hailed as a great achievement for the Backward classes and the realization of social justice in India. But the upper castes were not able to digest such a step. Therefore, there were agitations against the implementation of Mandal Commision recommendations. They created all sorts of Constitutional and political impediments before it could become a reality.

M.G.R. Government's Experiment with Economic Criteria in Reservation in the Tamil Nadu

M.G.Ramachandran, when he was Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, tried to fix economic criteria for reservation for the Backward Classes. His Government issued a Government Order on 2 July 1979 prescribing an income limit of Rs.9000.00[36]. There were protests against the experiment. Several Caste Associations opposed the experiment that was Constitutionally invalid. Agitations were organised by the D.M.K. and the Dravidar Kazhagam for its immediate withdrawal. They also planned for a three-stage stir against the move of M.G.Ramachandran. Therefore M.G.Ramachandran had to call for a meeting with the leaders of different castes. Caste associations became active and virulent. Finally he sensed that his popularity and identity with the non-Brahmin Backward Classes was eroding. Therefore his Government not only withdrew the G.O. but also increased the reservation for the Backward classes from 31 percent to 50 percent. The total reservation exceeded 50 percent. Batches of writ petitions were filed in the Supreme Court. In October 1982, the Supreme Court directed the Tamil Nadu Government to review the list of the Backward classes in the State. As a result, M.G.Ramachandran's Government had to appoint the Second Backward Classes Commission in December 1982. Its report, submitted in February 1985, became controversial. The Vanniar Sangam began its militant agitation and demanded more representation for its community. It intensified its agitation and asked for separate reservation for the Vanniyars. The Vanniyars continued their agitation until the Tamil Nadu Governor announced in December 1988 the acceptance of compartmental reservation for certain Backward classes in the State.

D.M.K.Governments Decision On Compartmental Reservation

The D.M.K. Party formed Government in the State after the 1989 elections. The D.M.K. Government's Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi announced

on 13 March 1989 the compartmental reservation of 20 per cent for the Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities who constituted about 1.22 crores of population and 30 per cent for the Backward classes who formed about 2.17 crores[37]. A.N.Sattanathan, who headed the First Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission, and J.A.Ambashankar, former Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission, appreciated the decision of the D.M.K Government. The Brahmins who opposed the reservation policy began to demand reservation for their community also. The Tamil Nadu Brahmin's Association in its third State Conference held at Tiruchi on 26 December 1989 insisted economic criteria as the basis for extending concessions[38]. In 1990, as per the Madras High Court verdict, a separate one per cent was reserved for the Scheduled Tribes and the reservation became 69 per cent and the open quota was reduced to 31 percent.

Challenges to 69 per cent Reservation

The Supreme Court gave a verdict on 16 November 1992 in the cases connected with the Mandal Commission recommendations. It said that the total reservation should not exceed 50 per cent. There was a constitutional challenge to 69 per cent reservation in addition to the clandestine opposition of the upper castes to it. The Madras High Court said in 1994 that the Supreme Court order to limit the reservation to 50 per cent should be given effect from 1994-95. The A.I.A.D.M.K. Government under J.Jayalalitha had to face the political compulsion of retaining the reservation announced by her mentor M.G.Ramachandran. A special session of the Tamil Nadu State Assembly was convened on 9 November 1993 and a unanimous resolution was passed in the State Legislature urging the Centre to amend the Constitution to protect the basis of the reservation policy of Tamil Nadu [39]. Leaders belonging to all the parties in the Legislature endorsed the resolution. The Government organised a 12 hour State wide bandh on 16 November 1993 to press the Centre to amend the Constitution so as to enable the State to continue the 69 per cent reservation [40]. All political parties supported it. The Tamil Nadu Assembly passed the Tamil Nadu Reservation Act 1993 in December 1993. It received the President's assent in July 1994 and was included in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution in August 1994 under Article

31B of the Constitution. While the A.I.A.D.M.K.Party supported the 69 per cent reservation as a ruling party, the Opposition political parties also unitedly resolved in a meeting organised at Tiruchi on 13 June 1995 to fight for social justice and the retention of the 69 percent reservation [41]. Thus all political parties in Tamil Nadu, including the Janata Party headed by Subramaniam Swamy, irrespective of their political ideology, extended their support to the 69 percent reservation. The D.M.K.Party, which came to power in the State in 1996, tried its level best to retaln the 69 per cent reservation. The A.I.A.D.M.K. Party under J. Jayalalitha joined the B.J.P. led coalition Government at the Centre, which was formed after the 1998 elections, by getting an assurance of the B.J.P. to protect the present reservation in the State.

Conclusion

Caste Associations put forth first the demand for the distribution of public appointments among various communities. The Dravidian Parties consider the reservation system as an important means to remove the social backwardness of several backward classes, which acted as the stumbling block of their educational and economic progress, in the Indian society. Therefore they extended their support consistently to the reservation policy. Though rural India still acts as the den of social inequality, substantial progress in achieving social equality has been made as far as interactional and interpersonal contacts are concerned.

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10. ***Ibid.,*** p.128.

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13. From just 11 names in 1883 to 39 in 1893 to 46 in 1903 to 122 in 1923 to 131 in 1923 to 182 in 1933 to 238 in 1943 to 270 in 1953 to 302 in 1963 to 323 in 1988. Since the appointment of the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes Commission on 15th March 1993 another 148 communities have sought inclusion in the Backward classes list. Out of this enquiry has been completed in respect of 73 communities. The Tamilnadu Government Web site says that 70 per cent of the population of State consist of Backward Classes and it also details about the welface measures of the State with regard to them.

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21. The Madras Christian College, Loyola College, Women's Christian College, Stella Mary's College in Chennai, Christian Medical College and Voorhees College, Sacred Heart College in North Arcot, St.Joseph's College, Trichy, American College, Madurai, St.Xavier's College, Tirunelvelley and Nirmala College, Coimbatore are very popular Christian institutions in Tamil Nadu.

22. Muslims : New College, JBAS Women's College, Crescent Engineering College, Muhammed Sathak College in Chennai, Islamiah College, C.Abdul Hakkim College, Mehrul Ullum College in North Arcot, Jamal Muhammed College, Trichy, Sadakatullah Appa College, Tirunelvelley are popular.

    Punjabis : Gurunanak College and Anna Adarsh College in Chennai are popular.

    Jains: D.G.Vaishnav College, D.B.Jain College, A.M.Jain College in Chennai are popular.

Brahmins : Meenakshi College, the Sanskrit College, N.K.T.College of Education in Chennai, the National College and Seethalakshmi Ramaswamy College, Trichy are popular.

Vaishyas : Sowdeswari College, Salem, Sri Vasavi College, Erode and C.B.M. College Coimbatore are popular.

Naidus : P.S.G.Institutions and Krishnammal College in Coimbatore are popular.

Nadars : Senthil Kumara Nadar College, Virudhunagar, the Ayya Nadar College at Sivakasi and S.Vellaisami Nadar College at Madurai are popular.

Mudaliars : The Ethiraj College in Chennai and the Erode Arts College in Erode are popular.

Kongu Vellalas : The Vellalar College for Women, Erode and The Kongu Nadu Arts College, Coimbatore are popular.

The Yadavas : The Yadavas College in Madurai is popular.

Vanniyars : The AdiParasakti College at Melmaruvathur and Kalavai are popular.

23. The Pachaiyappa's College, Vivekananda College, Sir Theagaraya College and the Hindu College come under this category.

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DALITS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA: A HISTORICAL CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. S. Manickam

Fifty four years are gone-by since India achieved her independence. Only very recently were over, the year-long Golden Jubliee celebrations. So, it is only in the fitness of things that we do some stock-taking with particular reference to the Dalits and their development in socio-economic dimensions. Food, security, health, education, employment and participation in decision-making on development priorities are some of the crucial components of human development. Whether or not the Dalits received their due share of the fruits of development during the post-independence period is the crux of the matter.

The word 'Dalit' means oppressed or ground-down. Though people of similar conditions could also be referred to by the same word, in this paper the term 'Dalit' would specifically refer to the SCs and STs only. Variously designated as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, Adi-Dravidas, Harijans, Scheduled Castes, etc., these people, particularly from Maharashtra, have discarded the old names of odium and social stigma given to them by the Caste Hindus and have adopted the term 'Dalit' as their new name since the early days of the 1970s. "The expression 'Dalit' is, therefore, a statement of their struggle for human rights. Much more than a change of name, it expresses a new outlook, identity and pride." It also signifies the total rejection of the oppressive features in Hindu society, so far as the Dalits of India are concerned.

The Dalits in India (SCs and STs together) consitute more than 24% (16.3 and 8.0) of the country's population. In 1991 itself both the SCs and STs accounted for 206.2 million (138.2 and 68 mn respectively). In the mid 1998, the numerical strength of the SCs alone comes to around 156-160 mn, which is more than Pakistan's population.[2] One is simply stuck by the staggering figures and can easily imagine the implications of such numbers for welfare and development programmes and still more, for political action. Yet, in employment,

literacy, health care or other indicators, Dalits are worse off than most. That's why there are signs of restlessness and change within these groups. The change of nomenclature is just one instance of these signs of restlessness and desire for change.

The Dalits are heavily concentrated in some of the States such as Uttar Pradesh (29.3 mn. in 1991), West Bengal (16 mn.), Bihar (12.6 mn), Tamil Nadu (10.7 mn.) and Andhra Pradesh (10 mn.). Several other states also have sizeable proportions of Dalit population.[3] In Tamil Nadu,out of the total population of about 56 million in 1991 (55,858,946), the SCs and STs enjoyed a numerical strength of 10.7 mn. (10,712,266) and 0.6 mn. (547,194) or 19.2% and 1.0% of the total population respectively.[4]

Dalits are found among all religions. More than 70% of the total Dalit population belongs to Hinduism. A sizeable number of them could also be found among the Muslims, the Sikhs, the Buddhists and the Christians. Remarkably, nearly 75% of the Indian Christian Community are Dalits. Just by looking at these figures one could easily spell out the socio-economic, educational and political implications of the Dalit strength, particularly at a time when the electoral and vote bank politics have given them an opportunity to gain in visibilty and voice. Groupings are emerging among the poor capable of confronting their oppressors and this process is bound to get accelerated in the years to come. But unfortunately the Dalits are not yet fully aware of their own strength and bargaining power. This is mainly due to lack of proper education, right kind of leadership as a rallying point and unhealthy internal dissensions. Besides being religiously and lingually divided, the Dalits of India are also sadly vivisected on sub-caste lines and territorial distribution. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, from Rajasthan to Assam one can see the Dalits living as a pan-Indian community, yet plagued by mutual hatred and unhealthy rivalry. The Mala-Madiga, the Paraiya-Palla conflicts for caste superiority and counter claims over certain Civic Rights are the best examples for the impediments that stand in the way of their united action and future development.

Now let us deal with Dalit vis-a-vis Social Development during the Post Independence period which is now under review. Divergent views are held regarding

the concept of Social Development. There was a formidable tendency in the 1970s to equate development with "economic growth". In a UNESCO publication, "designed to clarify certain basic concepts concerning the contribution of education, science and culture to development", it was stated. "For us in the United Nations development means growth ... which is primarily quantitative, which is essentially economic which is basically measurable; which is both the cause and consequence, the source and symbol of other social signposts".[5] D. Lerner in his research paper entitled "Modernisation: Social Aspects" states: "Modernization is ... the process of social change in which development is the economic component".[6] However, the economic determinism of "development" has been seriously challenged in recent times by the economists themselves. Among them Tinbergen, de Jongh and G. Myrdal deserve special mention. A growing body of social scientists, therefore, adopt an eclectic, indeterministic, or an omnibus attitude towards the concept of social development. The omnibus (widely comprehensive) attitude is clearly stated by B.M. Gross: "In a more fundamental sense, 'development' may refer to any aspect of change in social structure or performance -- often with the implication that it is desirable or induced.[7] Social development in the context of Post Independence India is a "desirable" value-loaded concept having the implication of particular kinds and degrees of social change from a particular base and towards a specified goal.[8] Thus social development and social change are inter-related concepts though they can be separable. "Social change represents any observable difference in any social phenomena over any period of time".[9] "Social change is the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system", says Rogers.[10] The term social change must also include changes in attitudes or beliefs, in so far as they sustain institutions and change with them. Let us see social development in the Indian context. Let us also examine whether social changes and social development have taken place in the Indian body politic in general and the Dalits in particular during the post-Independence period.

The term "development" owes its origin to the renaissance which is essentially a global, scientific, humanistic and secular movement. It is a humanistic force, with the sole aim of protecting, preserving and propagating human values. India is one of the countries which could not consciously remain

indifferent to this enlightning, enriching and empowering phenomenon. Hence, the concept of development should be understood as the most significant, human value relevant to every culture and civilization, be it Eastern or Western.[11]

The concept of "development" is the contribution of the modern world. It has developed largely as part of the interventionist policy of the modern State. It involves an organised and planned strategy on the part of the State for the development of the under-developed and weakened sections. Secondly, development is sought to be achieved through democratic means. This presupposes people's participation in decision making in matters of identifying priorities, distribution, management etc. The notion of "development" is understood and accepted by the modern State as a cherished human value, and underdevelopment as a disvalue.

The concept of development of Indian context could best be understood the way The National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad, has perceived. It rightly maintains that "development is integral growth of people as true human beings on each and every human aspect. Mere economic development does not constitute real development. Apart from economic well-being of the people, they must realise the political, cultural and social aspects of their development. Underdevelopment is due to illiteracy, erroneous planning, blind adaptation of outside cultures and technologies, lack of people's consciousness of scientific temperament, backwardness of their life outlook, superstitions, blind customs etc."[12]

Values conveyed through words such as "development" and "underdevelopment" have brought about a radical change in the aspirations of the people of India at large, eventhough there are quite a few still unwilling to allow the status quo and the traditional mould to change. To those obscuranists any attempt to change the established system is a serious violation of dharma. However, in the context of ever-increasing importance being given to values such as justice, liberty, fraternity and equality and also in view of the failure of the Indian traditional society in liberating the people from the dehumannized and subhuman conditions, and in response to the expectations of the people of India, the new political leadership in the post-Independence India has attempted several development projects.[13]

Realizing the magnitude of underdevelopment and the plight of the rural poor, which are but the legacy of the centuries old Indian culture, the post-Independence Indian governments have initiated large-scale economic programmes. The Union Government in India has also constitutionally committed itself to emancipate the underdeveloped India basically by altering her economic condition. Some of the constitutional provisions testify to government's commitment. The Five Year Plans launched and the huge sums of money spent on umpteen number of development programes speak for this economic thrust of government's development efforts. But "this too a lopsided development in the sense that even this quantitative development has become the monopoly of the strong, industrial, bureaucratic forces. The poor, the weak and the marginalized are further pushed to the outskirts of real development. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, the rich in India have been the beneficiaries of the development programmes. The dispossessed and the discriminated on the other hand become almost the orphans of quality of life."[14]

Since Independence the poor have made some gains but they still remain too weak and vulnerable to move upwards with their own initiative and efforts. The system helps them in distress but does little to nurture them as productive and creative beings. There are many question marks on the capacity of economic reforms to bring about sustained growth accessible to the poor. The underlying policy-making processes focus on the short-term gains of a few groups rather than on the long-term challenges to the system posed by the future.

With the advent of independence, national fervour and human values combined to place the poor at the centre of the policy-making for growth and development. The plan documents and the formal policy pronouncements do indeed take such a position. "But looking at the economic changes and achievements since independence, it can only be said that the groups influencing the strategy towards the poor took a modest step forward rather than the giant leap promised by the Founding Fathers and their illustrious successors."[15]

The strategy which emerged after independence did recognize the limitations of charity-based help to the poor. It worked towards organizing a nationwide support system for the poor which includes employment programmes, public distribution of food grains, minimum needs programme, etc. The objectives

also included programmes for structural change such as panchayats, co-operatives, regulated markets, land reforms, control of money-lenders, etc. Compared to the pre-independence position of the poor, the new strategy made substantial achievements, but it also revealed while relief measures like employment programmes, PDS progressed relatively smoothly, measures for structural change which would have hurt the groups implementing the strategy towards the poor made a lot of noise but little headway.[16] Therefore, V.M.Rao says in his well-researched paper that; " It would not be unfair to conclude that these groups were ready to concede some ground to the poor but they also enforced an invisible line barring the strategy from entering the terrain of structural change."[17]

Development schemes to generate self-employment for the poor are usually availed of by the upper strata among the poor. In fact, it is learnt that while selecting beneficiaries for IRDP and TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment) the poor among the poor are kept out as they have been observed to lack both motivation and capacity to make effective use of self-employment opportunities. The growth opportunities created by enconmic reforms seem to be even less accessible to the poor.[18]

As regards access to educaion, health, etc, there is growing awareness among the poor about the importance of these inputs in improving their condition. In fact the upper strata or the creamy layer among the poor who have gained some success in their upward mobility make every effort to give good education to their children even at a very heavy cost. While the response from the poor is very encouraging and positive, corresponding encouragement from the government side is not forthcoming. "While the demand side is responsive, the supply side poseses a major barrier in the spread of education, health, etc. It is a paradox in our policy-making towards the poor that while the rural schools and dispensaries serving the poor remain neglected, the higher level institutions in the cities patronised by the better-off sections in the population are maintained in a much better state and provide heavily subsidised dervices. Education and health are also fields where commercialised services would not only help the poor but could also be harmful in other ways", observes V.M. Rao.[19]

The progress of the poor towards empowerment could be observed along three dimensions: i) Access to growth opportunities enabling the poor to increase their income in a sustained manner to levels high enough to lift them above the poverty conditions; ii) Investments in education, health, nutrition, etc. which are important in themselves as well as to strengthen the capacity of the poor to get access to growth opportunities; iii) Participation in decision-making on development priorities, allocation of funds, choice of schemes and selection of beneficiaries. While the strategy for empowering the poor in the first two aspects has been highly ineffective, its working in the third area is also quite unsatisfactory and dismal. The poor in general and the Dalits in particular are not able to participate in the decision-making process. In the caste-ridden rural society, the dominant castes see to it that these poorer sections are effectively kept at bay through physical intimidation and psychological brainwash.

The much publicised Panchayatraj and the participatory involvement of the poor in the decision-making process at the grassroots level is a thorough failure, so far as the Dalits are concerned. Fear of death and physical torture at the hands of the Caste Hindus have scared them away and as a result even to this day several of the Panchayats reserved for the Dalits remain non-functionaries, for even the duly elected President and Council members have not been allowed to perform their duties. The classic case in this respect is the Melavalavu Panchayat in the Melur Taluk of the Madurai district. Six of the Dalits including the President and the Vice-President were brutally murdered in the broad day light for no other sin than winning the Pachayat Council elections. Caste and class have complemented each other in maintaining the status quo leaving the Caste Hindus in a powerful social and economic position. This has given them enormous leverage to control the village political system, notably the village Panchayat.[20] Therefore, the Panchayat, an agency meant for empowering the rural poor, is the weakest link to-day in the development chain. "They exist only on paper - or still worse, operate at the behest of the traditional oppressors of the poor - in most of the States."[21]

The plans and programmes may be well-meaning ones and the formulators may also be genuinely motivated by the dynamics of social purpose. Yet planners can only plan; they cannot execute. It is done by the bureaucracy and the officialdom. They are very much rooted in the traditional Indian hierarchic culture

and as such they are generally not in tune with democratic values such as justice, equality and liberty. They are least prepared to lift the poor up to the level of the developed. "On the contrary, majority of them seem to be anti-poor and anti-justice".[22]

The Dalits feel that the Caste Hindus view any development activity in the Harijan colony as a threat to their dominant position in village. They also suspect that the Caste Hindus prevent the benefits offered to them by the Government and other sources from reaching them and use the material that are supposed to be designated to the SCs for the benefit of the main village. Materials for street lights, extension of pipeline to provide drinking water to the colony, roads, subsidies under the IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) are just a few examples of benefits which are originally ear-marked for the Harijan Colony but eventually utilized in the main village itself. The Caste Hindus take two courses of action : i) prevent the benefits of Government programme from reaching the Dalits and ii) are hostile not only towards any development-oriented action but also to those who are instrumental in promoting such action.[23]

Similar or the same is the fate of reservation in services. As a result of the sustained battle fought by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and due to the co-operative attitude and understanding displayed by the Central and State governments, the SCs and STs have obtained reservation in services . But the percentage of quota provided for the Dalits is not being filled-up properly or fully. Several thousands of posts reserved for SCs and STs still remain unfilled and most of them have been carried forward. While there has been a continuing demand for proper and effective implementation of the Reservation Policy, the Supreme Court's Judgement in Mandal Case has given a rude shock.

Also reservation in promotion and provision for carrying forward of vacancies have been declared as invalid. This has caused very adverse effect on the advancement of the SCs and STs . Even the much talked about 69% reservation of posts in services etc. is helpful only in the case of Backward Classes and the Most Backward Classes and certainly not in the case of SCs and STs. "The present situation reveals clearly a pronounced tilt on the part of the politicians and political parties in the country to speak for the Backward and Most Backward classes without bothering about problems faced by the SCs/

STs."[25] "There is no effort on the part of the Tamil Nadu Government to look into the issues affecting the SCs and STs namely taking away of carry-forward formula, denial of reservation and promotion etc. In the resolution, which was passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to retain 69% reservation, there was no reference to these issues," asserts A.Padmanaban, an eminent retired IAS officer, who held several responsible positions in the State and the Centre.[26]

The Education Facilitation Centre at Chennai feels that the reservation policy of the Government is inadequate creating the illusion that the Dalits get Government benefits in large number. The reality is in the contrary and it has been acknowledged in the annual reports of Service Commissions and in Parliament that the reservation quota of 15% for Dalits is never filled in higher categories for one reason of other. In 1987, for the All India Services like the prestigious IAS, IPS, only 8.23% Dalits were selected through the competitive examinations. Often promotions to the Class I category for Dalits is negligible because the eligibility clause states that the "candidates must be fit for promotion". But who decides their fitness? The socially privileged few always find the Untouchables "unfit". For Class II 10.4% of Dalits were selected. It is only the lowest category Class IV - the last grade like office messengers, peons, etc. - the quota about 20% is filled.[27] From 1987 to 1991, the position has improved only slightly: Class I from 8.23% to 9.09%; Class II form 10.4% to 11.82%; Class III from 14.4% to 15.65% and class IV from 20% to 21.24%[28] This comparison holds good only in the case of the SCs. Because of reservation, the Dalits have fared only a little better in securing jobs. Their share in employment, especially in better positions like class I services, is still very meagre and quite far from being just and proportional to their population.[29]

The Protective Discrimination envisaged in the Constitution is unfortunately bound to make the Dalits become victims of the culture of subservience. They are made to feel that reservation is a sort of charity which the governments provide out of mercy to the poor. In accepting these reservations, they are once again reminded of their polluted condition and also their low caste status. It will only create in them demoralized and dehumanized Indian citizenry. "In this fashion, development programmes undertaken by the State are systematically promoting the cause of underdevelopment. Development of the poor in India by the Governments, is proved to be the most powerful myth of

modern times", emphatically States Dr. Wilson from Hyderabad.[30] He further observes: "The State in India is constitutionally committed to socialism but consciously perpetuates Brahminism. Whereas socialism is aimed at egalitarian society, Brahmanism is dedicated to hierarchic society. Socialism seeks to establish equality; but Brahmanism is committed to inequality. This dual role is exposed in the manner which reservations to Scheduled Caste are implemented. In this context, embracing Hinduism is made a pre Condition to avail reservations[31]. Only on that ground millions of Dalit Christians have been discriminated against and deprived of the benefits through constitutional safeguards.

Due to these and several other factors, the Dalits have been unable to penetrate into the mainstream of the Indian society. As the Eighth Five Year Plan Report observed in 1990, "a very large number of Dalits continue to be socially and educationally backward."[32] According to this report, a much greater percentage of the Dalits population lives below the poverty line than that of the general population, and the Tribals are even worse (General population = 33.4% SCs = 44.7% and STs 52.6%).[33]

The 1991 census data show that the Dalit literacy rate is still 15% behind that of the general population. The Tribal literacy rate lags behind by 23% . Only a small proportion of the SCs (18.7%) and STs (7.4%) population lives in urban India as compared to the 29.2% of the general population.[34]

In Tamil Nadu, as per the 1991 census figures, the SCs' literacy rate is 46.7% while that of the STs being 27.9% as against 66.8% of the total population of the state. In other words the SCs and STs lag behind by 20.1% and 28.9% respectively.[35]

In the educational field also the situation is not bright. The proportional enrolment of SCs and STs in various courses of higher education is much below their respective percentage of 16.3% and 8 % in the total 1991 population.

A NCERT 1986 study reveals the fact that out of all the Dalit children who entered the educational stream, less than 15% completed SSLC i all schools and 11% in rural schools.[36] The Ministry of Human Resources Development in its report for 1992-93 says that 49.62% of SC and 64.53% of ST school children drop out at the primary level itself, 79.88% of the SC and ST

students drop out by the time they reach higher secondary.[37] The same NCERT study highlights that the basic educational facilities and civic amenities in rural schools most of which the Dalit children attend are pathetically poor. Such conditions obviously aggravate the Dalits' educational backwardness. Besideds deficiencies in the quality of teaching retard proper learning.

It is widely believed that the rapid quantitative expansion of educational opportunities is the corner-stone to accelerate socio-economic development; it would contribute towards skill formation, productivity, and learning of new ideas and techniques. The Indian National Education Commission of 1966 expressed its view that education should be used as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political change. With this view, the State in India has opened several new Universities, Colleges, High Schools and Elementary Schools all over India..But "contrary to the State's expections the education system in India has perpetuated and increased social segregation and widened economic differentiation."[38] The type of education offered in rural areas has very little relevance to their situations, problems and needs. The results of formal education in this respect are very disappointing. Indian planners themselves acknowledge that although equality of opportunity has been the underlying principle of the education system, in practice most of the benefits have gone to a small minority only.[39] Formal education has mostly catered to the needs of the rich. Further, our educational system is not based on a specific comprehensive national philosophy in which the views and needs of every section are represented. Such a system can not contribute for the developments of all. We have developed a wide range of schools to suit the interest of every grade of people. For instance, we have Public Schools, Private Schools, Government Schools, Central Schools, Community Schools, Minority Schools, Navodaya Schools, Residential Schools, etc. Each school has a different educational approach. The teacher-pupil ratio varies in these schools from 1:15, 1:40; 1:60 and even 1:80. The gap in the matter of library facilities is phenomenal. The funding is highly discriminatory. Physical conditions of schools are both enviable and pathetic depending upon the nature of the school. Class distinctions are clearly strengthened through these different systems.[40]

Generally the children of the poor go to government schools. Often times, students of the oppressed sections, who come from rural background and who have their education in schools with no proper facilities, academic or

otherwise, and where medium of education is in mother tongue are made to compete with those students, who had their education in the English medium and highly funded best schools in urban areas. Failure on the part of the rural poor students to prove their academic excellence in the competitive tests is judged as a sign of their traditional and natural incapacity. Such an unequal education system cannot contribute for the emergence of an equal social system.[41]

Majority of the children of the Dalits are existentially forced to go for humanities only. The SC and ST students mainly choose the Arts courses rather than the more difficult and more expensive Science and Commerce courses. In the institutions such as Institutes of Technology and Institutes of Management etc. where largest amount of money in the total budget on education is spent, majority of the students happen to be the children of the affluent. For example, in 1988-89 only 5.8% and 4.9% of the undergraduates and postgraduates in Science respectively were Dalits.[42] "Here again, the traditional hierarchic social myth continues to operate perhaps more effectively."[43]

The available data clearly establish that, comparatively speaking, the SCs remain economically disadvantaged. In 1991, 69% of the SC workforce were still agricultural workers when compared to a lower 60.6% of the other workers. Large number of Dalits still work as "attached" or bonded labourers. In 1990-91 71.8% of the SC land owners had less than one hectare. Though the SC share in the total operated area has increased from 7% in 1980-81 to 7.9% in 1990-91, this still remained well below their 16.3% proportion of population.[44]

<u>Social or Human Status:</u> Even after fifty four years of independence, only a very little change has taken place in the social status of the Dalits. The traditional hostile attitude of the caste Hindus and their discriminatory activities against the Dalits still continue. Their attitudes have remained the way they were centuries ago. This, perhaps, is the crux of the problem.[45] Many of the Dalits in the villages are still made to work for longer hours from dawn to dusk for lower wages than those of casual labourers. They are shouted at with acerbic language, threatened with dire consequences and/or beaten up mercilessly. They have to stand up even if a child from the caste village visits their house to call them to labour. If a Harijan, even adult, did not show respect to the child by standing up, the child's parents would come and beat up the Harijan. They have

to carry their sandals in their hand, wear the dhoti folding it above the knee and not ride a bicycle or a bullockcart while they pass through the main village. They cannot draw water from the common well or pound nor can they have tea from a tea shop in a tumbler.[46] The coconut shell is provided for them. The Dalits in the rural areas are still facing open violence and social segregation. A 1986 survey conducted in 1,155 villages reveals that Dalits were denied access to 613 wells, 821 temples, 496 hotels and restaurants, 473 barber shops and 603 laundries.[47] The five year old Dalit school girl by name Dhanam from Kattunaickenpatti in Salem District in Tamil Nadu lost her eye-sight because her school teacher, a caste Hindu, beat her up for dirinking water from a cup reserved for upper caste students.[48] The prevalence of untouchability, in the rural areas is a stark and grim living reality and it reveals itself in different guises. The Sri Sornamurthi Easwaran Temple at Kandadevi village near Devakottai is a classic case of Civic Rights violation. On the basis of untouchability, the Dalits were prevented from dragging the temple car by the dominant caste Hindus of that region. Even the High Court Judgement which upheld the rights of the Dalits did not improve the situation. Atrocities against the Dalits are on the increase. A study of five states by the National Commission for SCs and STs found an increase of 8% in the atrocities being committed against the SCs, atrocities were often related to political and economic issues regarding land, wages, debts etc. Increasing number of Dalits are being murdered, grievously hurt, and Dalit women are raped.[49] In 1968 in the village of Keezh Venmani, Tanjore district, forty-two Dalits were burnt alive for the sake of demanding a wage-rise.[50] In the recent caste conflicts in Kodiankulam in the Tirunelveli district and around Paramakudi in the Ramnad District hundred of Dalits were mercilessly kicked, and houses ransacked and women's modesty outraged.

Even after fifty four years of Independence, we could still see every village being bifurcated into caste quarters and Harijan colonies. The continued segregation of Dalits is a sad commentary on India's social progress. Inspite of the Abolition of Untouchability Act (1955) and Protection of Civil Rights Act (1973), Untouchability is still practised in rural Tamil Nadu. Writing on this issue Tharian Mathew says: "There are still pockets in the interior areas of Tiruvannamalai-Sambuvarayar district where untouchability is blatantly practised. The many Untouchability eradication programmes initiated by the government have apparently not made the slightest impression or brought the slightest change

here. Untouchability still rules the root here".[51] Human Rights violation in the case of Dalits is at a high rate. Even the legal measures enacted for the upliftment of the Dalits such as SCs and STs (prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 suffer from a shabby implementation.

This Act provides for the appointment of special prosecutors, setting up of special courts, deterrent punishments against various crimes, and the submission of an annual report to the government. But who is to implement these provisions? Again the bureaucracy and the officialdom most of whose personnel are drawn from the Caste Hindus. It has been found out by experience that these bureaucrats and officials also manifest the traditional dominating psyche and discriminatory ethos. The Government machinery, by and large, reflects colonial culture. This is one of the crucial and psychological factors ubiquitous amongst most of the government officials.[52] Further, there is a well established nexus between three powerful groups in India. They are, the religious establishment, political system and the economic empire -- the combine of feudal and capitalistic interests. This combine stands very much in the way of the development of the rural poor.[53]

During the post-Independence period new alignment of forces has taken place. Political and economic power has shifted to the numerically dominant, land-owning, non-Brahmin middle castes such as the Kongu Vellala Gounders, Vanniars and Thevars in Tamil-Nadu. They have enforced caste discrimination more aggressively on the Dalits than the Brahmins.[54] The Caste Associations such as the Kongu Vellala Gounder Sangam, Vanniar Sangam, Thevar Peravai and the Backward Classes Federation, etc. have been stronger today than ever before. While these Caste Hindus want the higher castes above them like the Brahmins to give them proper status and rights, by giving up caste arrogance and Brahminical superiority, they in turn would not like to do the same towards the SCs. In fact the real cultprits who commit atrocitics and cause untold misery to the helpless millions are the middle Caste Hindus, the BCs and MBCs. Unless there is change for better in their attitude and behaviour towards the Dalits in villages, there is bound to be tension and violence.[55] "In their antipathy and hatred of the Scheduled Castes, all the four segments in Chaturvana viz., Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras combine together. Their combined weight and oppression fall on them who are outcastes."[56]

The sum and substance of this study is that substantial part of the poor in India (whom we call the poorer groups among the poor) are still at a precarious subsistence level lacking any credible food or employment security. "Not only the strategy towards the poor failed to provide such security to them but it has also neglected the essential tasks involved in empowering the poor: improving their access to growth, providing basic services like education, health etc. and building up institutions helping the poor to mobilise, participate and to play a role in taking decisions shaping the economy and the society. Frankly, given the ruling groups formulating and implementing the strategy, it is difficult to see any major change occuring in the strategy in the coming years", observes V.M. Rao.[57] This is because the micro-level linkages between caste, class and power have influenced the formulation and implementation, or the absence of the state policies in order that the Caste Hindus might maintain the inequality keeping the Dalits powerless and lower in the caste-class hierarchy. This explains why in Indian villages "economic inequality is typically the outcome of social inequality and the reverse is also true".[58]

Through reservation some positive results have been achieved in the life of the marginalized and hence the policy of reservation should continue. Moreover, mere political freedom without social and economic freedom is not true freedom. Hence, more radical measures are also needed to empower the Dalits in order to build a truly egalitarian order. Since such radical and structural changes have not taken place, the lot of these suppressed millions has not improved significantly even after 54 years of Independence. Under these dismal circumstances the history of the Dalits in India is still a saga of continuous suffering and oppression only. Being the victims par excellence of 'cumulative domination' the Dalits in a caste-ridden society still suffer from multiple deprivation. The sources of their deprivation were and still are "low ritual status, appalling poverty and powerlessness."[59] The developmental programmes have touched only the fringe of their problems which are myriadfold.

A vast majority of the Hindus are still deeply caste conscious and are concerned about purity and pollution and hence the Dalits, particularly in the rural area, are still suffering from social stigma and religious taboos. The Constitution of India has abolished the practice of untouchability, but it is still practised in many parts of India. Atrocities against the Dalits are on the increase.

In any bloody riot it is only the Dalits who are killed, burnt, raped and degraded. The sancity of their human person is deliberately desecrated. In every instance of such riots, the State is either late to protect the Dalits or does not act at all. Sadly the intelligentia and the middle class are oblivious of the plight of the Dalits.[60]

The Dalits have experimented with every possible means to attain human dignity in the past. They have changed their names, created new myths to establish their identity based on self-respect and social esteem, taken to conversion to other religions as a mark of their dissent and protest, sought legal remedies and formed political parties but all of them have been of no avail. Therefore, their tale of woes has not yet ended.[61] The rapidly deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the Dalits have given rise to an acute feeling of deprivation among them. As a matter of fact, the Dalits "do not feel the sense of relative deprivation but of total alienation and exclusion and feel the threat of physical liquidation."[62]

Throughout the country the Dalits have been completely alienated from resources like land, water and agricultural implements. The Dalits "do not find any access to either the natural and human resources on the one hand and feel totally marginalised from the so-called decentralisation of political power in rural India" on the other.[63] It is this perception of total exclusion from the development process that forces the Dalits to protest in the most militant way ranging from radical reaction to physical retaliation in self defence. The Dalits once docile and submissive are now in a militant mood. This militancy, evident among the Dalits of Andhra, Bihar and Maharashtra, is slowly spreading to other parts of the country as well.[64]

The formation of the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and the literary outburst now recognised as the Dalit Literature in the Marathi language amply give expression to the militancy and frustration of the younger generation Dalits. The ideology of protest against the Hindu caste system based on relative deprivation has made the Dalit movement a social movement, nay, a Protest Movement in the strict sense of the term. Their consciousness of the injustice done to them thousand of years in this country has created in the Dalits a righteous indignation and the spirt of militancy. The Scheduled Castes "have become increasingly militant in demanding their rights and have inclined to a revolutionary

path (not necessarily the Marxian path) for their social amelioration. These people suppressed and oppressed for centuries together have come to the forefront with a new awakening and consciousness ... shaped by both content and discontent from the protective discrimination policy evolved for their betterment. This has also been generated from their political awareness and exposure to the outside world", says P.G. Jogdand.[65]

For their allround backwardness and underdevelopment in the spheres of economics, education and employment, the afflicted Dalits hold the ideology of Brahminism responsible. "Today, Brahminism is what distinguishes the Indian ethos from others. Brahminism in the present social setting has to be understood as the ideology of any ruler who suppresses other for his own welfare irrespective of his caste background."[66] The oppressive forces which contribute to this ideology of Brahminism, according to the Dalit Panthers' Manifesto (1973), are: power, wealth, price; land lords, capitalists, money lenders and their jackeys; those parties who indulge in religious or casteist politics, and the government which depends on them. In the opinion of the Dalit Panthers the burning questions before the Dalits today are: food, clothing, shelter; employment, land, untouchability and social and physical injustice. So, in order to get redressal for these problems, the agitated Dalits earnestly feel that the struggle for their emancipation needs a total revolution. The ultimate end of this revolution is the capture and exercise of power in economic, political and cultural fields. They are of the firm opinion that change of heart, liberal education, etc. will not suffice. Only political power would bring about a structural change and that alone would empower the Dalits for deciding their own destiny.

To Ambedkar the whole question of caste and untouchability was a power question. Gandhi saw the liberation of the Untouchables in changing the attitude of the Hindus, whereas Ambedkar saw the Dalit liberation in capturing the political power. To him the question of untouchability is a state of powerlessness." As an insightful anthropoligist Ambedkar said: "The root of untouchability is the Caste System. The root of the Caste System is religion attached to varna and ashrama, and the root of varnashram is Brahminical religion, and the root of Brahminical religion is authoritarianism or politcal power."[67]

Therefore, the power structure based on caste can be destroyed only by distributing power to all castes and communities. If injustice proceeds from collective power, whether in the form of imperialism, class domination or caste hegemony, it must be challanged by power. This is the staunch belief of all the Ambedkarites. As a genuine follower of Ambedkar, Dadasaheb Kanshi Ram, the founder leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh, guided the deprived masses rightly towards capturing of political power, reiterating Ambedkar's message: "Political power is the master key for your social progress".[68] Having learnt from the bitter experience of the Republican Party in the past that no Dalit Party could ever win an election exclusively on its own strength, the Bahujan Samaj Party formed an electoral alliance with Janata Dal, which is predominantly a party of Yadavas, one of the Backward castes. In the UP Assembly election of 1992, this alliance proved its worth when it captured power in the State. BSP, though, predominantly a Dalit Party, has wider issues to attract the OBCs as well. It does not play the caste card.[69]

Similar developments are taking place in Tamilnadu also. Recently, some of the Dalits of Tamilnadu have joined hands with Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), a predominantly Vanniyar Party (MBC). "Though the Dalits have yet to formulate a nation-wide coalition, they have much clout in regional politics."[70] The great measure of political power the Dalits have gained in the last few decades have made them important players in Indian politics which has become politics of numbers. The social use of protest has become a viable instrument of the desired social change.

By way of summing up, it is to be stated that however dismal the picture might look, the Dalits need not lose hope. They have to struggle on courageously , educating their fellowmen to organize and agitate for their legitimate due. Let the Dalit leaders gear up their activities more vigorously in internationalizing the Human Rights problems of the Dalits. Rising well above their sub-caste mentality they should work for Dalit solidarity. Non-Governmental Organisations and Voluntary Agencies should chalk out special programmes to empower the Dalits.

Today, rays of hope are visible on the horizon. One could discern among the Dalits strong will and determination to protest and revolt and to assert their

rights. This is the most redeeming feature in India in recent years. They are to be properly guided. Seminars and symposia, workshops and field study ought to be arranged regularly to educate and empower them in terms of knowledge about their culture and history, constitutional rights and privileges. Their abused minds should be disabused and more positive ideas about them ought to be planted. They should be taught to give up the age old inferiority complex, cringing nature, wounded psyche and distorted world view (weltanschauung). The fire ignited and the torch lighted should continue to burn till every Untouchable becomes Touchable and Human Rights and Social Justice are firmly enthroned in India.

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54. Surendra K. Vettivel, op. cit., p. 18.

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CASTE AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SUBALTERN MOBILISATION: THE CASE OF PALLARS

Dr. K.A. Manikumar

The party politics introduced in India was expected to cut through castes and sub-castes and split the people on economic and political lines. However, when mass participation in electoral politics based on adult franchise became possible, each caste group began to stake its claim for a share in the loaves and fishes of offices. Consequently, the Indian democracy has so far been a clever balancing of competing caste interests. Today the principle of caste is so firmly entrenched in Indian political and social life that political parties of every hue have to accept tacitly that in the State Cabinet each major caste should have a minister.

However, the remarkable thing political democracy has done simultaneously is that it has dealt a debilitating blow to the caste system in which division of labour was organized earlier on the principle of caste. Consequently, while caste system is gradually crumbling, caste affiliations continue to persist as caste identities help for political mobilization. Analyzing the reason for politicians attaching much importance to castes in their political calculations, Dipankar Gupta pithily remarks: '...they do so because they have nothing tangible and worthwhile to offer their electorates. Every politician knows that it needs a committed hard core to be a politically viable player. This hard core is, in most cases, drawn on caste lines. By working caste loyalties, political bosses strive to activate patron-client networks that they hope will bind their core supporters into a stable political unit'.[2]

The traditional lower castes denied of any decisive voice in governance in the past, therefore, whip up caste sentiments to forge unity among their kinsmen to have access to state power. Caste is the banner under which their political congregation takes place. This phenomenon, albeit recent, is strikingly present in Tamilnadu today. This paper seeks to discuss one of the subaltern castes namely Pallars otherwise called Devendrakula Vellalars. The Pallars consitute 21 per cent of the Dalit population in Tamil Nadu, while the other two major subaltern groups such as Parayars and Chakiliyars account for 59 per cent and 16 per cent respectively[3]. The emergence of the Pallars as a militant caste

group and their growing solidarity to secure a rightful place in the state polity has been phenomenal. In the first section, the social history of the Pallars is attempted. The second section deals with the collective failure of this dalit caste in promoting a collective venture. The third section highlights the use of electoral politics as a means of their political mobilization. The last section summarizes the outcome of such a strategy.

I

According to the orthodox view of their origin, 'sweat' of Devendra, the king of Gods, is said to have fallen on a plant growing in water from which arose a child, who is said to have been the original ancestor of the Pallans'.[4] Devendra Kula Vellalar is the dignified denomination used to denote Pallars, as a part of an attempt to justify the divine origin of their birth. Later, their oppressors using the same logic claimed that they were created by Devendra, the king of Gods, to labour for Vellalars. There are a number of sub-divisions among the Pallars. The multiple sects among them have been well articulated in a Tamil proverb; one can count the varieties of paddys and not the sub-groupings of Pallars. *Veeranattan, Kuzhavanattan, Samudranattan, Sivantinattan* are a few examples to illustrate the multiple divisions among them.[5] The Pallars usually suffixed the title *Kudumban* to their names. The inscriptions dating to the seventeenth century, one from Karivalamvandhanallur (Sankarankoil Taluk) and another from Srivilliputhur (Virudhunagar district), refer to them as "Devendra Kudumpan" and the "son of the celestial woman"[6]. However, the Veeranattu Pallars who consider themselves superior to all others put the title of *'Nattan'* before their names.[7]

The dalit intellectuals hold the view that the Devendrakula Vellalars were once the land holders enjoying a pre-eminent position in the Tamil society. Only Nayak rulers consfiscated their land and forced them into servitude.[8] One of the Mackenize Manuscripts records an oral tradition in which the Pallars are said to be the "mountain people" who settled in the plains. Professor Ludden thinks that this change of domicile might have been necessitated by wars with Pandyan rulers. Ludden adds that it might have also been probable that primitive Pallar cultivators preferred better-fed subservient status in irrigated villages to their precarious independence in the hills or plains.[9]

Whatever the case, Pallars and Pariahs were found working in the muddy paddy fields and living in segregated neighbourhoods as untouchable outcastes, when the British conducted land survey towards the close of the 18th century. Pallars were agricultural serfs of landlords of the dominant castes until 1843, the year in which serfdom was abolished in India. In Thanjavur, they were attached to Brahman households and in Tirunelveli to Vellalar landholdings. A Pallar could neither change the village of his living nor could opt for any other work. A run away Pallar could always be coerced to return to his master. The Pallar agricultural serfs received their daily wages in grain and gifts on special occasions. Their work was also more arduous, for men and women performed practically the whole work of grain cultivation of a village.[10] The compiler of *Tanjore District Gazetter* recorded the condition of the Pallars at the beginning of the twentieth century: 'Now, as then, the *pannaiyal* is usually paid in grain and not in money; he is given presents on festive occasions and is often in debt beyond recall to his landowner. Moreover, when an estate is sold, the 'right' of the landowner over the *panniyal* (i.e. the debt due by him) is often also transferred in the document which transfers the ownership of the land'.[11]

Contrary to the impression that they were sluggish and inefficient in work, the first Tirunelveli district collector, S.R. Lushington, found them enterprising. He also noted their anxiety in getting early emancipation: 'Despite the scanty means of subsistence, the Pallars in their eagerness to obtain relief from affliction in bondage, usually contracted their wants to the mere preservation of their lives with an expectation that the accumulation of their savings might enable them to purchase freedom at a not distant future'.[12] The Anthropologist G. Oppert who studied about Pallars observed as follows:

> The Pallars ... toil unintermittently to enrich their master, the actual owners of the land (soil) and they were until very lately not much better than bond slaves. The time is not remote when the owners of the ground even regarded them as their property, as helots belonging to the land. Continued bad treatment and exposure to all kinds of hardships have been their sad lot and it is only natural that the condition should have eventually told on their mental and physical development, but it speaks, on the other hand, much for the superiority of their original nature that inspite of all the miseries endured they have been able to retrieve their position under a tender government and now starting again with fair prospect of improvement.[13]

Lushington and Oppert spoke about Pallars in the wet agricultural zones. The Pallars and Parayars in the dry tracts, however, managed to establish relatively independent peasant households. British officials recorded this distinction in the nineteenth century, when they endeavoured to induce all "laboring castes" to perform roadwork for wages. To their surprise, embarrassment rather, they discovered that dry-zone untouchable Pallars did not consider themselves laborers at others' command. Since they were at the command of village high-caste families, they refused to submit to the dictates of the English to volunteer for roadwork. The Company officers had to use force and decree that all untouchable castes were of the same status, whatever their local situation.[14]

Similarly, there were Pallars, who commanded *mirasi* rights to organize gang labour for public service. Leading Pallar families possessed superior status, income, and authority by virtue of such *mirasi* rights.[15] A court case in 1849, for instance, mentioned about the *mirasi* or *kani* right enjoyed by the headmen among the Pallars of Tentirupperi village. It spoke about the fee received in grain or cash by the heads of the Pallars in compensation for services rendered by them in procuring labourers for repairs of irrigation and other purposes.[16] A Pallar headman thus drafted to raise labour gangs when needed enjoyed special status. In some villages, the Pallar headmen organized the entire production process, working for one large absentee landowner or upon temple land. A situation that corroborates in the seventeenth-century Tamil folk drama, *Mukkudal Pallu*, whose hero, as headman, seems to have had considerable skill and some special social status.[17]

Pallars had to perform a variety of jobs such as building and repairing irrigation works, doing gang jobs to build roads, temples, and other structures, "digging, hauling and piling dirt and rock". Their low-cost labour helped the colonial government subsidize public works. In agriculture, groups of Pallar men would plow, manure, and thresh, while groups of their women planted, transplanted, weeded and harvested.[18]

Before 1820, the courts upheld the claims of labourers and service castes to a fixed share of the village harvest, in return for some village employment. But in course of time such claims lost all legal recognition. Judicial Courts concurred

with *mirasidar* litigants, who pleaded for the deprivation of the traditional rights enjoyed by Pallars as compensation for servitude. One European judge went to the extent of proclaiming that such traditions violated principles of free exchange. Consequently, *misrasidars* obtained both the benefits of bonded labour and immunity from claims by labourers to a share of the village grain heap. Thus after 1820, the Pallars were deprived of their traditional right to security of income and employment in *mirasi* villages.[19]

Yet, the strong community life of the Pallars had cultivated sustained them. In Thanjavur each Pallar street had one headman who formed a link between the Brahmin and Pallar streets. He had the authority to summon the street members for collective public services such as channel digging, road repairs and transplanting. He produced the offenders for trial before the Brahmans in the village temple premises, represented the Pallars' grievances to their landlords and presided over monthly and occasional meetings of the assemblies of adults (married men) of his street. The headman also witnessed the marriages and divorces between persons of different streets or different villages. In the Cheri, headmen and assemblies of all the streets gathered to resolve disputes between members of different streets.[20] As the headman intervened even at the slightest sign of defiance by any individual or a crisis in sombody's family life, he could play the role of unifying force and develop strong ties of kinship and solidarity within the locale.

II

The European Christian missionaries laid the foundation for social protest in India. Though they were interested in evangelization of the religion, they attacked the superstitious beliefs and the caste atrocities of those days and created a new awareness among the outcaste groups. The issue of caste exclusiveness raised by them caught the imagination of "polluting castes" of south Tamil Nadu. The Pallars began to convert to Christianity, which promised self-respect to all outcastes in Tamil society. Successive famines that broke out in Tamil Nadu from 1876 also drove the Pallars, as an economically vulnerable group, into the fold of Christianity, as Church only had organized famine relief camps and charity homes to feed the hungry then. The Pallars invariably took to Catholicism or Lutheranism as these two denominations particularly empathized with the subaltern groups.

Yet, another factor that awakened the dalits was the wave of emigration that swept every part of Madras province since the last quartor of the nineteenth century. The Census officer of 1931 noted the significance of this phenomenon in Thanjavur context;

> Emigration is a great teacher of self-respect, for caste is to a large extent put away when the Indian emigrant crosses the sea...Social effect of emigration has been...a growth in independence and self-respect on the part of the depressed classes.... A man, who, little removed from praedial serfdom in Tanjore, finds himself treated on his own merits like every one else when he crosses the sea, paid in cash for his labour and left to his own resources, most in the majority of cases benefit from the changes, and it is probably the existence of the emigration currents that has contributed most to the growth of consciousness among the classes in India.[21]

Those who articulated the aspirations of the Pallars initially were religious converts and repatriates. *Bhu Vaishya Indira Kula Sangam* was the first organized effort of such awakened Pallars. The founder of this association was Perumal Peter who, as an emigrant, had his early education in Penang and later served as a school teacher in Rangoon. At the outbreak of the First World War, he returned to his native village Peraiyoor and settled down as a practitioner in indigenous medicine. He organized the first conference of the Pallars in 1922. Representatives from 150 villages of Ramananthapuram district met at Sengottaipatti in Muthukulathur Taluk. There was one more conference of the same persons in the same village. One ana from each household was collected in villages that were represented in the conference to meet the travel and food expenses of the participating members.[22]

The resolutions passed in two conferences stressed the need to get education for male and female children of the Pallar community. The caste conference urged the caste people to give up the caste related obligations such as drum beating, beating the breast by dalit women in funerals of caste Hindus. The conference also called for abandoning the practices of tattooing, child marriage and polygamy among the Pallars. The Sangam was formally registered in 1923.[23] Perumal Peter took to Christianity in 1925. He advocated conversion to his

caste people with the conviction that it would enable their caste people to earn self-respect, christen their children according to their own desire and wear dress of their choice. He also thought that by embracing the religion of the ruling class dalits could hope to secure the intervention of the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police in their favour in the face of atrocities by the caste Hindus.[24] The Christianity organized churches, schools, hospitals and welfare societies for the Pallars, but failed to transform their support into political action.

The economic grievances articulated by the landless labourers in the wake of Great Depression in areas where they were not organized in labour unions contributed to the upsurge of caste agitations in the 1930s. The Pallars who constituted a sizable chunk of such labourers in Ramanathapuram district, thanks to the ground work done by Perumal Peter militantly fought back when the dominant castes as landholders refused to address their legitimate grievances. What was an agrarian revolt was mistaken for defiance of rural authority and sought to be suppressed by violent means. A contemporary police report described the classes between the Pallars (agricultural labourers) and their landlords (Maravars) and noted that 'the movement of the Adi-Dravidas towards their emancipation is almost a mass movement. At several places in the district, time bound obligations of degradation were thrown aside and the concerted efforts of higher castes to resist and suppress the movement led to situations which were with difficulty controlled by the Police'.[25]

In the context of Great Depression, the Pallars of Tirunelveli gave vent to their desire to found a caste association. *Indira Kulathiba Vellalar Aikya Sangam* spanning its activities in the district was set up in 1933. The objectives of the Sangam as stated in its by-laws were: (a) to protect their kinsmen from caste oppression (b) to create awareness amongst them to take to education (c) to motivate them to take to trade and business and (d) to lobby for basic physical facilities in Pallar villages. The Sangam became defunct shortly after its birth. This was because of the repression let loose by oppressive zamindars of Tirunelveli, a large number of Pallars of Tirunelveli showed their protest by taking to Christianity and later in certain instances to Islam in the thirties and fourties. Seethaikurichi instance is a case in point. In this village that remained under Uthumalai zamin a sizable number of Pallars embraced Islam in 1944. Earlier a few Pallars families had taken to Catholicism.[26]

The Communist Party of India organized the Pallars of Thanjavur on class lines. It does not mean that there was dearth of caste associations for the Pallars in Thanjavur. Marianathan, a Nannilam school teacher, attempted to organize Pallars and Parayars in *Palankudi Makkal Munnetra Sangam* (Scheduled Caste Development Organization) in the late 1940s. However, the caste-class nexus was so overt in Thanjavur that the communists had no difficulty in mobilizing the dalits on class lines. The *Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam* (Agricultural Labourers Association) formed in 1939 succeeded in getting the bonded labour system abolished and enhancing the wages of the landless labourers who belonged to Pallar caste.[27]

Pallars and Paraiyars had transcended all caste restrictions except endogamy in Thanjavur district. Although their immediate interest was to obtain higher wages and fixity of tenure, they believed that Communism would ultimately bring about an equal division of land between the households of all caste and would totally abolish caste restrictions. It was also the hope of the communist leadership that such class conflicts, irrespective of their outcome, will in the future increasingly weaken the identities of castes.[28] During the all-India elections of January 1952, the Brahmans reportedly directed, and bribed their own non-Brahman tenants and labourers to vote for the Congress Party. But, many of them voted for the local Communist candidate, who won the election. Some Vellalar, Kallar and Naidu landlords who had previously lent support to the Dravidar Kazhagam in opposition to the Brahmans, allied with Brahman landlords on grounds of class affinity and were pitted against the tenants and labourers.[29]

The Communist- led struggles prompted the Madras Government to pass the Tanjore Tenants' and Labourers' Ordinance in September 1952. It was replaced by a legislation, i.e., the Land Ceiling Act. This legislation applied to landlords owning more than five acres in one village. It guarnteed fixity of tenure for the kuthakai tenants and an increase in the tennant's share from approximately one-fifth to two-fifths of the yield. As for the Pannayals, an increase in wages roughly amounted to be a doubling of the then existing rate.[30]

The gains of the dalits of Thanjavur in the economic struggle against their oppressors were impressive. The Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam in which they were organized had a membership of 200 at the time of its inception (1939). It increased to 45,000/- in 1973. The prevailing rates of labour wages in the early

1970s were considered the highest in East Thanjavur. It should be noted here that when the State government appointed a Commiitee for revision of minimum wages for the agricultural workers in Tamilnadu, it excluded this region from the committee's purview.[31]

The Sociologist Kathleen Gough did field work in Thanjavur first during 1951-53 and later in 1976. She noticed the changes that had taken place in the time span of 25 years in Thanjvur. In 1951, almost all Dalit children over age 7, or about 22 per cent of all children, worked as agricultural labourers. In 1961, 5 per cent of children under 14 were recorded as employed in agriculture. But when she returned there in 1976, only few children could be seen in the paddy fields of Thanjavour as labourers.[33] In every village dalit children were attending the elementary school. The agitations of the Communist Parties both CPI and CPI(M) had contributed to the decline in the incidence of child labour. Another positive feature noticed by Gough was the gradual disappearance of *pannaiadimai* system (bonded labour). In 1952, *Pannaiyals* were 37 per cent of the male agricultural labourers in Kumbapettai and 61 per cent in Kirippur. By 1976, *the pannaiyals* had declined to 9 percent in Kumbapettai and to 14 per cent in Kirippur.[33]

The rights and obligations of those few *pannaiyals* also had changed during this period. In 1952, *the Pannaiyals* in many villages could be beaten for defiance and misdemeanour. In 1976, it was rare to see a master beating his *pannaiyals*. In 1952, recalcitrant *pannaiyals* were forced to drink cow dung solution. By 1976, this odious practice had disappeared.[34] Since 1952, the public amenities available to the dalit labourers had improved. Most of them had electric street lighting, newly dug wells instead of pools to provide drinking water and well built roads. The caste restrictions imposed on the dalit labourers had been considerably reduced. They could walk freely in the streets and wear shirts and ankle-length instead of knee-length clothing.[35]

However, in Kumbapettai and Kirippur where Gough conducted field studies, the population of agricultural labourers had increased. In the first village, male agricultural labourers formed 61 per cent of the male workers. By 1976, they had increased to 78 per cent. Women labourers also increased from 72 per cent to 92 per cent of the total female work force in agriculture. Gough observed that the greater part of this increase comprised members of families of former cultivating

tenants.[36] This was because the Thanjavur Cultivating Tenants and Pannaiyal Protection Act, 1952, instead of regulating the agrarian relations in favour of labour, helped to subserve the interests of the landlords. The Act required that when a cultivator, owning more than 6 2/3 acres of wet land or 20 acres of dry land, dispensed with the services of a *Pannaiyal*, the matter should be reported to the Conciliation Officer within seven days. The Officer was empowered to probe the matter and direct the cultivator either to reinstate the *Pannaiyal* or to order payment of compensation to him, when the dismissal was found to be improper. The landholders in connivance with the bureaucracy used this provision to terminate the services of *the Pannaiyals*. Another important shortcoming of the Act was the lack of provision for protecting the sub-tenants who were mostly drawn from the dalit caste groups. As a measure of vengeance, the landlords, temples and mutts evicted the sub-tenants, who were thus reduced to the rank of landless labourers. In the survey conducted by Gough, 61 per cent of the dalits (mainly Pallars) remained either casual labourers or unemployed in 1976.[37]

Thus, when we analyze the changes that have taken place in the aftermath of class struggles in Thanjavur in which the Pallars played a prominant part, it is known that their struggles helped to end social oppression. But the government's tenancy legislation and land ceiling laws, designed to bring about fundamental changes in land ownership relations, were circumvented by the landholders, in connivance with the powers that be, to the detriment of the intended beneficiaries.

III

Perumal Peter continued to be the beacon of the community in Ramanathapuram district by actively involving himself in the Congress Party Policies. Yet, he did not neglect his community needs. In 1954, he started the Tamilnadu Evangelical Lutheran Christian Union to press for reservation in jobs and representation in policy making bodies for his caste people. He stressed the importance of education in this context and took steps to start a high school in Perayoor in 1956 (July17).[38] The Pallars who rallied behind Perumal Peter later joined Immanuel Sekaran when he organized the Depressed Classes League (organized country-wide by Jagjivan Ram) in Mudukulathur and Paramakudi taluks. But then they were all under the spell of the Congress Party and worked for the Congress victory in elections to Parliament and state legislature. The area where

Perumal Peter worked for the well-being of dalits remained the bastion of Muthuramalinga Thevar, who broke away from the Congress and founded, the Forward Bloc Party in 1949. Perumal Peter's hope Immanuel Sekaran was murdered allegedly at the instance of the Maravar leader Muthuramalinga Thevar.

The infamous Mudukulathur riots that ensued following the arrest of the accused in the Immanuel murder case did not evoke any precipitous response in Tirunelveli district. Yet The *Indira Kulathiba Vellalar Alkya Sangam* which had been revived in Tirunelveli in 1956 met on October 12, 1957 and called for stringent action against those responsible for the attacks on dalits. It also demanded financial relief for the victims of caste violence in Ramanathapuram district.[39] The voice of protest expressed and the moral support thereby extended to their caste brethren in Ramanathapuram district should be considered the first recorded instance of collective Pallar solidarity expressed.

Yet, there was no state-wide organization to work for the cause of the Pallars until 1967, when the Tamilnadu Devendrakula Vellalar Sangam with headquarters at Madurai was formed. Its proclaimed objectives were to strive for educational development as well as for the economic progress of the Community by forging unity among the caste people all over the state. The organization could not make much headway in view of the slender support given by relatively wealthy Pallars For instance, the effort to found a college in Seydunganallur for which E.V.R. Periyar laid the foundation in 1970s ended in failure for want of funds. Hence the need arose for the birth of a similar organization with Tiruchirappalli as headquarters in 1983. The activities of this Association are today highlighted by its monthly journal *Indirar Kural*.[40]

The Pallars, lacking financial resources and the entrepreneurial skill that is indispensable for achieving self-reliance, felt let down by the mainstream political parties who successively failed to address their basic problems. Therefore, they resolved to carry their struggle onto political platform. They began to contest elections to the state legislature exclusively on the dalit political platform. Though they could not win the elections, they could tilt the scale decisively in favour of one party or the other In 1977, relying on the support of dalits exclusively,

Perayoor Muniyasamy contested independently and lost the Mudukulathur Constituency only by a margin of 400 votes.[41] Therefore, in areas where Pallars were concentrated they were treated as vote bank by the mainstream political parties that vied with each other in winning over the caste leaders.

The emergence of John Pandian of Sivalarkulam village in Tirunelveli and his All India Devendra Kula Vellalar Munnetra Sangam at this juncture in 1983 led to the mobilization of the Pallar youth in Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts. The murder of local Pallar leader, a school teacher, by name Chelladurai in 1982 caused a void in the Ramanathapuram district, which was promptly filled by John Pandian. The simmering caste tension in the Meenakshipuram Village (near Bodinayakkanur) since the local panchayat elections and the murder of a Pallar woman under mysterious circumstances triggered caste clashes of unprecedented magnitude between the dalits and non-dalits in Madurai district in 1989. John Pandian's inflammatory speeches and his incitement accelerated the conditions of the conflict. Bodinayakanur affair profiled John Pandian as a mass leader of the Pallars in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. He was addressed by his followers as "Pallar Padai Thalapathy" (commander of Pallar force). His popularity prompted the Pattali Makkal Katchi leader Ramadoss to field him in the 1991 general election under his party's symbol. It was no mean achievement that John Pandian secured second position next to the winning candidate of the AIADMK-Congress combine.[42]

1995 should be considered as a watershed year for the Pallar militancy in south Tamil Nadu. The news of disfigurement of the statue of Pasumpon U. Muthuramalinga Thevar, the much-deified leader of the Maravars, in the wake of Pallar and Maravar clashes at Veerasigamani, set the stage for the unleashing of violence on the dalits. While earlier generations of dalits may have taken these things lying down, the new breed of youths especially with the backing of dalit organizations, such as John Pandian's outfit and the Thiyagi Immanuel Peravai (named after the marty- of Muthukulathur event) began to retaliate. Street fighting, stabbing, and bomb throwing and arson became order of the day. In the first week itself atleast 18 persons lost their lives, and half of them were persons of dominant castes, and property worth a few crores of rupees, apart

from the scores of public transport buses that became the targets were destroyed. For over five months, incidents of caste riots and violence were being reported on an almost weekly basis.[43]

The entire course of events showed the complete inability of the state machinery and polity to respond to the situation. What was most distressing was the role of the police. At many places, while rampaging mobs attacked the dalits, the policemen were silent onlookers. Little was done to prevent or take action against the people involved in violent incidents. At the same time, the police under the pretext of an all-out search for suspects and weapons conducted midnight raids in many villages. kodiyankulam, which was providing leadership to the neighbouring villages, was the scene of such brutal action. The Kodiyankulam people held out a threat of conversion to Islam. Incidentally, the famed Meenakshipuram, where 250 dalits converted to Islam in 1981, is not very far off. Kodiyankulam incident provided Dr. Krishnaswamy of Tamilnadu Federation of Devendrakula Vellalar Sangams, launched in 1985 from Coimbatore, an opportunity to win the goodwill of Kodiyankulam villagers and establish his hold over the dalits of Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli district.[44] John Pandian, paying for his Mafia style of functioning, was in jail and hence could do little to make use of the situation to retain his sway over the Pallar community. Later, when he was released from jail, he could do virtually nothing to stop his wanning popularity.

The unflinching support of Kodiyankulam and other neighbouring villages later prompted Dr. Krishnaswamy to contest from Ottapidaram Assembly (reserved) constituency as a candidate of the Devendrakula Vellalar Federation in alliance with the Janata Party led by Subramaniam Swamy in 1996. Dr. Krishnaswamy contested on the Janata Party symbol and won, defeating the AIADMK, DMK and the MDMK candidates. Although the dalits voted for DMK in almost all the constituencies, they rejected the DMK, the AIADMK and the MDMK candidates in Ottapidaram from where Dr. Krishnaswamy contested. Again, in Srivilliputhur, Rajapalayam and Vasudevanallur constituencies where the dalit candidates of Devendrakula Veilalar Federation contested (on the Janata Party symbol), they did reasonably well against the DMK and the AIADMK candidates although they were defeated. In Srivilliputhur, E.M. Guruswamy of Devendrakula

Vellalar Federation came third after the AIADMK and the Communist Party of India candidates. At Rajapalayam (reserved) constituency, K. Dhanuskodi of Devendrakula Vellar Federation emerged fourth after the Tamil Manila Congress, the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) candidates. [45]

After Krishnaswamy's election to the provincial legislature even those who had distanced themselves from his organization have begun to rally behind him in a big way. His followers have been in the vanguard of *Puthiya Tamilagam*, a political party launched by him in 1999 for mobilizing the Pallars all over the state. Closely following his heels, John Pandian also transformed his caste outfit into Tamilaga Munnetra Kazhagam. The disillusionment of Pallars with the mainstream political parties such as the Congress, the DMK and the AIADMK was manifest in Arupukottai Constituency where in 1998 a by election was due. M. Mennakshisundram, a dalit voter reflected his mood: 'I am a DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) party member. I have about a dozen dhotis with borders that have DMK colours (black and red). Although I do not have the heart to say this, I do say that I will not vote for the DMK candidate now. A man belonging to our community has raised the banner of revolt. We would like to watch how he shapes up. We will vote for the candidate belonging to the party founded by him.'[46] John Pandian's Tamizhaga Munnetra Kazhagam, and Krishnaswamy's Puthiya Tamizhagam Party, have politicized the Pallars. The Pallars have developed themselves into fearless people and like the Blacks determined to live their lives as if nothing could frighten them. The emergence of such assertive Pallars has meant that they would not take discrimination lying down.

The deliberations with the office-bearers of the Associations belonging to all dalit castes, prominent dalit activists of the non-governmental and women's organizations, the dalit panchayat union presidents, dalit intellectuals, youths and students, numbering in all about 200, held at Manonmaniam Sundaranar University in the wake of 1995 caste clashes in Tirunelveli region brought into sharp focus a wide range of issues concerning the dalits. What was astounding was that even after century old struggles and resistance most of the participants were raising the human rights issues, like practice of separate glass tumblers for dalits in tea stalls, non-provision of drinking water facilities, denial of access to

village tanks and public roads, absence of cremation ground or approach road to cremation ground and lack of toilet facilities for women in Dalit housing colonies. The fact that the government has not bothered to tackle even these human rights problems helps us understand as to why dalits have rejected all mainstream political parties and are rallying behind their caste leaders.[47]

Another distressing development has been the prejudiced behaviour of the police against the Dalits of all hues. This has been reprimanded even by the Supreme Court in its judgement on the police high-handedness in Nalumoolaikinaru (Tuticorin district) in 1992. While the people were asleep, police went to this village at about 4.30 a.m. and attacked the Dalit (Parayar) men and women causing severe injuries to many persons. The state laws like Protection of Civil Rights Act and the Prevention of Atrocities of Harijans Act have hardly been enforced to gain the confidence of this deprived section. The police excesses in Kodiyankulam, and in the recent tragedy on the banks of Tamiraparani in which the police drowned 11 Pallars to death in Tirunelveli have alienated the Pallars further from the mainstream of politics.

IV

As we have seen, the journey from serfdom to assertive subaltern militancy has been arduous for the Pallars. But the proportionate gains accrued to them are minimal as none of the mainstream political parties has addressed their problems in right earnest. Apart from human rights issues, there are serious agrarian issues like low wage for their most onerous work, mounting incidence of indebtedness and lack of employment during the lean season. In the aftermath of caste clashes in south Tamil Nadu, the dalits living in several villages are determined not to work in the land of their oppressors and not to borrow money from them. This, however, has not affected the cultivators-cum-creditors of the dominant caste very much because landless labourers of even other dalit caste groups are not in solidarity with the Pallar labourers. This aspect stressed the need for organizing the landless labourers on class lines.

However, today Pallars have realized that if their long standing grievances are to be addressed by the State, then their protest has to be translated into electoral force. As the sociologist E.R. Leach says, if a caste group plays the

role of political faction by competing with other such factions for some common objectives, it thereby acts in defiance of caste system. In this respect, the mobilization that is taking place to involve the Pallars in electoral politics is desirable. However, a broad based unity among various dalit groups is desideratum for forcing the state to pull them out of the moornings of misery, ignorance and idleness. It should be noted here that violence associated with their political action is detrimental to their interests in the end. Violence as a form of collective political expression is always counter productive as it is bound to result in a decrease in political involvement in course of time. The American Sociologist William Gamson, who has done historical studies of numerous protest groups, claims that 'successful groups (who were excluded from political power) almost never used violence as a primary tactic.... Violence, in short, is the spice of protest, not the meat and potatoes'.[48]

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Caste Associations

MUKKULATHOR - A CASE STUDY

Dr. S. Kadhirvel

David Washbrook says, "One of the most obvious features of political modernization in South India has been the emergence of politics of the caste association.[1] He further stresses that this trend was set in the late nineteenth century and grew through the twentieth century. But actually in the Tamil scenario, this has been in existence since the days of the Rastrakutas. This means that the idea was not alien to the Tamils. With the commencement of mercantile trade in South India in general, and Tamil Country in particular, the Nattukottai chettiars had a sort of an association exclusively for their caste and particularly for trade.[2]

Such associations were compelled by necessity. Ethnic identity in an alien land, religious needs, competition in trade were parts of such necessity. Such organizations not registered in the sense it is understood, today, functioned well. There was mutual help and support in their field of activity. Commercial associations, trade guilds, etc. can be cited as case in point. This was possible because caste was a main factor in trade and commerce. It existed with the communities that were above average and ordinary.

Communication facilities extended the scope of such organizations. One such organization was the 'Mahamai' and 'Pettai' systems of the Nadars, who took to agriculture and trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries due to colonial policy of the Protuguese.[3] As the social systems existed in those days, these new traders, who could not park their carts in common places, carrying chillies from place to place, and could not draw water from the village wells, were forced to resort to the alternate solutions. The Pettai outside the village was the answer. The Nadars later formed themselves into association for better welfare measures.

Another type of association came into existence either to regain the lost privilege whether lawful or otherwise or to preserve the supremacy of a social group. The Mukkulathor [4] were organised themselves under this category.

Those who are familiar with the history of Tamilnadu will easily understand the implications of the kaval system.[5] This is a traditional system of village watch and ward and revenue collection. They were in control of the judicial administration too.This responsibility was particularly with the Maravas in the Southern districts of Ramnad, Tirunelveli and Madurai and with the Kallars in the areas North of Madurai and south of Tiruchirappalli. According to this system, the Kavalkarar duty was to protect the property, to see that there was no theft of food grains, and maintenance of law and order for the smooth functioning of the village system. They performed their duties in the non-poligar areas and the Kaval chiefs in due course became more powerful than the Poligars. In return, each landowner had to pay them some amount of grains or money. The kavalkarar had to compensate for the loss of property.[6]

The British East India Company paved the way for the alien rule. When the Madras Presidency was formed, they found that the Kaval Chiefs had assumed all powers and were running parallel governments, depriving the authorities of powers. After long consideration, the Kaval system was abolished by the Government in 1816. But actual stoppage could not be implemented. One of the main features of the system was that the kaval chiefs were to pay for the thefts occured in their area. Such a responsibility was not fixed for the police, which replaced the Kaval system at a later stage. The social administration of the village was also with the kaval chiefs.

Found Association : 1894

In 1894, in the Dindigul area the first challenge was thrown to the Kallars by one Ammayappa Kone, a Village Munissif of Usilampatty, to Karuppa Thevar, the kaval chief of that area. Ammayappa Kone caused disorder in the area collecting people from various communities against the collection of dues by the kallars which the kallars considered as their right. Ammayappa Kone urged the people to refuse payment of dues to the kallars. He advocated that the kaval dues were unlawful and need not be paid. He organised armed rebellion by collecting the communities other than the Kallars. Sensing the danger around, the Kallars also collected themselves into one group and started attacking their counterparts. They decided to collect the dues by force. The Kallars of 40 villages united together. For this purpose a fund was created. For the first time,

the Kallars had to contribute a little to safeguard their interests.[7] This confrontation resulted in large law and order problems and there had been a number of cases in the court. Surprisingly the Government supported the Kallars in the dispute.[8] In the beginning, the Kallars suffered some defeats but ultimately by their might they won over the situation. Kaval system continues till date in some areas.

Madurai Tamil Sangam 1901

Pandithurai Thevar established the Tamil Sangam on May 24th 1901. The objectives of the Tamil Sangam was to revive the glory of Tamil. Pandithurai Thevar wrote to all Thevar Zamindars and Pannayars requesting for financial help and in those letters he said that the revival of the Pandya legacy was the duty of the Mukkulathors and hence, the money should come from them. Although others participated and patronised later, the beginning was given by the Mukkulathors.[9]

Karanthai Tamil Sangam : 1911

In 1911, the Kallars of Tanjore under the leadership of Uma Maheswara Pillai established the Karanthai Tamil Sangam, with the financial assistance of the Kallars around. They did yeoman service to Tamil and later on the Sangam lost its identity. The Tanjore Kallars were interested in social reform for their community. They started a Sangam called 'Indirakula Athipar'. They started a journal called 'Kallar Koman' around 1914.[10]

This was followed by the 'Maravar Sangam' on 6, June, 1929 by the Raja of Ramnad. The objective of this sangam was the development of Maravas. They strove hard to bring the Maravas into the National Mainstream. However, it was closed down abruptly. The Madras Presidency Agamudayar Sangam was started by Sathiah Servai on 17-1-1932, with the objective of service to Agamudayars. It saw its birth, but not growth.

All India Mukkalathur Sangam 1934 :

All these attempts were futile. But some of the leading personalities were still optimistic of the outcome of a Sangam for all the three divisions of the Mukkulathors namely Kallar, Maravar and Agamudayars. A meeting of the few important people was convened at Madras by Muthiah Thevar, a businessman

during May 1933. Many important persons including the crown prince of Ramnad, Rajaram Pandian, met and started the All India Mukkulathor Sangam on 23-1-1934. In the first meeting, they passed a resolution that the three communities must have inter-marriages and must have a common name "Thevar". They also resolved to operate branch offices in all centres dominated by them, such as Rajapalayam, Srivilliputhur, Usilampatti, Periyakulam, Uthamapalayam, etc. The objective of this organisation was ethnic identity. One Sivanadi Servai played a major role in this.[11]

This Sangam was started with a motive to enhance the educational and economical position of the Mukkulathors and maintain the dignity of the community put together. They also wanted to find out why the community had not improved. They saw the other communities such as the Nadars coming up in trade and commerce, whereas there was none worth the name in this community. Among those who assembled, Rathnavel Thevar from Trichy was supposed to be the highly educated possessing a B.A. degree of the Madras University. One Muthiah Thevar, popularly known as 'Doctor Thevar', was an L.M.P. A survey of the community with their social and economic background was conducted. Unfortunately, this Sangam does not exist now, though it was registered under the Societies Act. There was a women's conference in 1934 at Madurai to discuss the emancipation of women of this community.

The All India Mukkulathor Sangam held its conference in Madurai on 25-6-1940. Those who were dominating the Tamil Nadu Congress Party from this community participated in this conference. Pattukottai Nadi Muthu pillai, Paganeri Udayappa, R.V.Swaminathan, Chella Pandian were the prominant among them. The main thrust was to restore the past glory of the community through education and social development. There was no specific agenda of demands. In general terms, they asked for improvements.[12]

In 1942, there was a district conference in Tirunelveli attended by 10,000 people. Here for the first time something was done. An amount of Rs.5,000 was distributed to the students of this community. They designed schemes for education of the community. They also established branches of the Sangam in Singapore, Rangoon, Colombo, etc.[13]

During this time a few people had been educated, as they were converted to Christianity and they could secure jobs. Otherwise the British treated them as militant group with high nationalistic ideas. Although they were brave, they were not taken into police forces. The Sangam took up the cause and pleaded with the government for a proper share in the administration. The same condition prevailed for the Agamudayars in the North districts until the rise of Sir. A. Ramasway Mudaliar and A. Lakshmanasamy Mudaliar. They were members of this Sangam and the former was the President of the conference in Madurai in 1943.

Rajapalayam Maravar Sangam : 1932

Established in 1932 by R.M. Rackappa Thevar, it was functioning in an orderly way. The youth reorganised the Sangam under the leadership of A. Mookiah Thevar in 1962 to suit the needs of time and renamed it as Maravar Mahasabhai for social development.

It is still functioning with 19 branches in the 19 Maravar streets. All adults are members and must pay one rupee as monthly contribution. In each street, one executive member is elected and they run the administration of the Maha Sabha. Maha Sabha collects taxes, and mahamai system is also followed in trade.

The Street Sabha acts as Panchayat and small disputes are settled and the Maha Sabha acts as an appellate authority. Educational scholarships and loans for small trade and industry are provided. On the same model, we have Usilampatti Piramali Kallar Youth Sangam serving from 1932. Thus the Mukkulathors first united themselves into one unit to protect themselves, to continue the traditional rights of watch and ward (kaval) and passed on to form Sangams to improve the social status.

Nanguneri Maravar Sangam : 1927

At Nanguneri there was a society registered called 'Maravar Sangam'. The Maravas of some influence in the Nanguneri Taluk are called Aru-Pangu

Nattu Maravas., i.e. belonging to six villages. Most of them depended on kaval fees for their livelihood. Kaval fee ran into problems. This group was a socio - political factor and a determining force in public matters. A section of the Maravars of Nanguneri Taluk who took up evil ways of living by committing cirmes was declared a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act in 1919. Respectable Maravars had decided in 1927 to reclaim the erring man in the community and to uplift the community as a whole by imparting proper education to the younger generation and to make the Maravars as respectable members of the society. With this object in view, a society was started in Nanguneri with the help of the District authorities.[15] Unfortunately, the Sangam did not take off.

The major attempt through these associations was to petition for jobs to the Government. It looks the communities spontaneously joined together to defend themselves from other communities but the same behaviour was not shown in social improvement.(e.g. Sivakasi riots)

END NOTES

1. The Development of Caste Organization in South India, 1880 - 1925.
2. Royal Banking Enquiry Commission of Burma, 1921.
3. S. Kadhirvel, Impact of Colonial Policy of the Portuguese on Trade and Society, 1975.
4. Kallar, Maravar and Agamudayar, have common cultural practices. Kallars and Maravars were known as warriors whereas the Agamudayars were little soft pedalling and attended to household affairs, and later took to agriculture.
5. For details, please see S.Kadhirvel, History of Maravas, 1977, Chapter on Kaval.
6. Ibid;
7. Even if the Kallars were holding, they were not used to paying any dues.

8. May be that the Government did not want Ammayappa Kone to be a third front.

9. Ibid., 1964.

10. Karanthai Tamil Sangam Records, S. Singarayan, R.C.S.H.R., 1963.

11. Records of the Regional Committee for Survey of Records, Madras, 1965.

12. Fr. Williams, Collection of Records, Coimbatore, 1966.

13. Ibid;

14. Records of the Maha Sabha, Rajapalayam.

15. Rao Sahib V.S. Padmanabha Ayyar, A Short Account of the Tinnevelly District, Palayamcottah, 1933, pp.40-44.

SOCIAL MOBILISATION OF VANNIYARS IN TAMIL NADU

Dr. R. Srinivasan

Introduction

The Constitution of India established a secular democractic system. The dream of the founding fathers of the Constitution was to install an egalitarian society with equality of opportunity and social justice. In order to achieve social, political and economic justice, they provided for a parliamentary democracy with fundamental rights for the citizens. But this parliamentary system of Government functioning in the traditional social system in India belied their expectations. The forces of casteism and communalism found a new leverage in the developmental process of post-independent India.

Theories of Caste :

In the traditional hierarchical varna order, the Kshatryas take precedence over the Vaishias and Sudras. They occupy the second important position next to tne Brahmins. However, this occupation-based varna system, which defined the functions of each caste slowly, disappeared with the spread of education and social reform. But the caste system continues to exist.

The word 'caste' owes its origin to the Spanish word. 'Casta" which means "breed, race. strain, or complex of hereditary qualities". The Portuguese applied this term to the classes of people in India known by the name 'Jati'. The English terms caste is a modification of a original name[1]. Although evidences of caste are to be found in many parts of the world, as among the present day Massai, the Polynesians, the Burmese and the Americans, the most perfect instance is that which exists in India. Here the social organisation, is "as elaborate in the heaped-up storeys as one of its own pagodas - and vastly more intricate". However, the exact origin of the caste system cannot be easily traced. The system is said to have originated in India. The records of the Indo-Aryan culture contain the first mention and a continuous history of the factors that make up caste. The people, who are known as Indo-Aryans belong linguistically to the

larger family of peoples designed either as Indo-Europeans or Indo-Germans. They comprised the Anglo-Saxons, the Celts, the Romans, Spanish, Portuguese and the Iranian among others. One of the branches of these people who reached India about 2500 BC is called Indo-Aryan.

There are many theories about the origin of the caste system. According to the racial theory of H.J. Mazumdar, the caste system took its birth after the arrival of the Aryans in India[2]. Ghurye in his political theory of caste, remarks that the caste system is a clever device invented by the Brahmins in order to keep themselves at the top of the social hierarchy[3]. Nesafield's occupational theory maintains that the nature and the quality of work performed by the various groups of people is the main cause for the origin of the caste system[4]. The religious theory about the origin of the caste system has been advocated by Hocart and Senart. According to them, social stratification originated because of religious principle and customs and also on the basis of prohibition regarding sacramental things[5].

However, the fact remains that the caste system did not come into being all of a sudden or at a particular point of time. It is the result of a long process of social evolution into which a number of factors entered. As matters stand today, rapid industrialisation, developments in the means of communication and socio-economic awakening, establishment of a democratic state and other factors have removed most of the rigidity and conservatism associated with caste system.

The Social Mobilisation of Vanniyars

The British during their rule adopted the policy of divide and rule by introducing communal representation in the year 1909 under the Minto - Morley Reforms. Hence, there was a flurry of activities before every reform was introduced, when a number of caste associations were formed hoping to raise the socio-economic status and get access to the centre of power. This indirect encouragement laid the foundation for the origin of caste associations in India, especially in Tamil Nadu. Since 19th century, a number of caste organisations have met in Madras Presidency organised themselves to perpetuate and extend their special privileges and to raise their social status. Through reforms, to provide for education of their children to help their poor and to petition for more

employment opportunities in Government services. The number of associations increased after Government of India Acts, 1909 and 1919 were enforced. The caste associations are one of the earliest organised interests in India. Tamil Nadu was no exception.

The history of the Vanniyar Sangham is an example of the development of a caste association. Vanniyars are primarily a group of agricultural labourers. The group includes a substantial number of cultivating tenants and petty landlords. Depending on various socio-cultural and occupational factors, including the place of their living Vanniyars acquired titles with different styles of living and food habits. The earlier attempt of the Vanniyar Sangham was to upgrade the position of the castes in the social hierarchy. In the early part of the 19th centruy, the Vanniyars were known as the 'Pallis' who were placed low in the social hierarchy. But they refused to accept their status as a humble agricultural caste through a petition in 1833. They sought upward mobilisation in society and hence tried to obtain a decree in Pondicherry that they were not a low caste. When the Census was prepared in 1871, the leaders petitioned that they be classified as Vanniya Kula Kshatriyas. T. Aiyakannu Naicker, a prominent 'Palli' who rose to the status of a High Court Vakkil published two books, supporting the claims of his caste to be Kshatriyas and claiming that the Pallis were descendants of the great Pallava dynasty[6]. Oral stories also spoke about their descent from the traditional fire races, which the Kshatriyas of both the North and the South India often claim as their ancestors. The Vanniyars held that they were high caste Hindus. Their argument was based on Puranic, historic and literary eveidences. Some historians have pointed out that there were places called Wanny in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and these were ruled by Wannies. Sir. J.E. Tennet says, "in modern times the Wanny was governed by native princes, styled Wannies and occasionally by females with the title of Wanichees"[7]. J.H. Nelson says, the Vanniyars are at the present time a small and obscure agricultural caste but there is reason to believe that they are the descendants of ancestors who in former time held a good position amongst the tribes of South India[8]. Robert Orme has narrated the war of Sivagiri Vanniyars with the Poligars and the incursions of the British during the 18th century[9].

The Vanniyar historians relying on the evidence mentioned above, hold that the derivative term Vanniyar, peculiar to Vanniyar of Agnikula race has been

used in tamil as a common name for kings. According to Aiyakannu Naicker, "the word Agnikula directly corresponding to Vanniyakula used in Tamil signifies only Kshatriyas or kings in its ordinary form and is in common usage by authors. This is something like a name, named after a cause, which gradually loses its etymological significance and becomes a common name. For instance, a Shastri is so named on account of his attainment in the shastras. But a Brahmin without any knowledge of the shastras is also called shastri and hence it has a common significance. In a like manner, the word, 'Vanniya', which means originally a descendant of the Agnikula Kshatryas, has subsequently come to mean any Kshatriya according to usage and context[10]. The Vanniyar leaders have always maintained that the word Wannies is applicable to the God fire.

At the turn of the century a number of caste associations were formed. When these new caste associations turned to politics, their main target was the census office, for the listing of caste and caste descriptions became more 'real' than reality itself, carrying as it did the authority of official imprint. M.J. Charters Moloney of the Indian Civil Service having survived the decennial onslaught of petitions from the caste who wanted to be reclassified, remarked in the census of 1911, "in the last few years, and especially the occasion of the present census, have witnessed an extraordinary revival of the caste spirit in certain aspects". For this, numerous caste 'Sabhas' have emerged each continued to persuade their members to give a new name to the census enumerators, and to persuade the census commissioners to list this new name when the old one bore some odium. They also urged the census officers either to revise the description of traditional caste occupations, when they were thought to be undignified, or to drop them altogether. The Madras census dropped caste occupation in 1921 as a consequence of these pressures.[11] The effectiveness of the 'Pallis' in influencing the official records on the one hand and their own members on the other was considerable. By 1921 the name 'Palli' had disappeared altogether from the census and only the Vanniya Kula Kshatriyas remained.

The notable organisation of the Vanniya Kula Kshatrya's is an assoication called Vanniya Kula Kshatrya Maha Sangham dating back to 8th April 1888. Initially the objective of the Sangham, in addition to upgrading the position in the social hierarchy, was to provide better education for their children with a view to getting Government jobs instead of relying on the traditional agricultural occupation.

Very soon many schools were established in different parts by Vanniyar leaders like Mr. Ettyappa Naicker in Pettu Nayagan Pettai, Madras (1890), P. Thyagaraya Nayagar in Thrikazhukundram and Kancheepuram (1891), K. Gopala Nayagar in Mylapore, Madras (1894), Rangoon M. Venkatasamy Nayagar in Thirukumalam (1898), P. Thyagaraya Nayagar in Madhurandhagam (1903), K. Gopala Nayagar in Royapuram, Madras (1904), P.L. Murugesa Nayagar in Poonamallee, Madras (1920). As early as 1891, the Vanniyar community had seven schools in the Northern districts of Tamil Nadu. Other schools were also started in various other places like Kaladipettai and Kayarkalwai in Pondicherry, Numgambakkam, Kosapettai and Thenampettai in Madras Presidency. Consequent on the benefits of education, the few Vanniyars were able to enter Government Services or they were employed as merchants or engaged in other pursuits. Meanwhile, there is a little evidence that the Vanniyars took part in some extremist activities between 1931 to 1939 by providing training in rifle shooting to some people in the districts of Salem and North Arcot against foreign rule. The Sangham stood for the cause of national independence against the foreign rule, along with the Indian National Congress. Vanniyar leaders were also strongly propagating for the introduction of prohibition in the Madras Presidency.

The Sangham became politically active again after independence when democractic institutions were introduced. The district units of Vanniya Kula Kshatrya Maha Sangham were initially more important than the state wide organisation which developed subsequently. In the early 50's Vanniyars began to build a sense of caste patriotism and solidarity which would make their association a more effective force. The wealthy among the vanniyars had a stake in politics and used their community to acquire leadership position for themselves in the political party. Most of the Vanniyar leaders became members of the Congress Party, and rose to the position of powers during the Chief Ministership of C. Rajagopalachari and K. Kamaraj, as a result of the support of their community. But the Vanniyar Sangham did not expand or thrive during this period. Their leaders who were occupying political position did not support or encourage the Sangham probably because of the non communal stand of the Congress party. They considered that the caste systems run counter to the

secular character of the party. But whenever the elections are in the offing, various political leaders negotiate with the leaders of the caste associations and ask their members to support their party. The reality being such, the Vanniyars started different associations under different leaders at different points of time to use them for political bargaining but not for their development..

After 1967, there was a change in the political arena in Tamil Nadu. The Victory of the DMK, a regional party in elections and its capture of power in 1967 was an important development. The Vanniyar leaders who aspired for political positions realised that their aspirations could not be accomplished by aligning themselves with the congress party. So they wanted to organise and consolidate the support of their followers. But they did not possess adequate political background and contact with the masses to win the support of the people. They were also handicapped in securing votes and support from other communities and sections of society because the Vanniyar Sangham stood for the benefit of the Vanniyars only. Hence, they could only appeal to the members of their own caste to support them in the elections. This appeal was based on the promise of special reservation in educational institutions and employment for Vanniyars. But most of the demands regarding reservation policy were originally supported by the Diravidar Kazhagam and later voiced by the DMK since its formation in September 1949. The DMK continued to support and put forward the causes of the non-Brahmins and down-trodden people and provide for reservation for the backward classes. Hence, the Vanniyar leaders last their grip over the reservation demand and non-Brahmin issues. The Sangham was very dormant during 1970-1980.

The fundamental issue of reservation for the Vanniyars (2% in Central Government and 20% in State Government) was revived again by S. Ramadoss. His speeches and those of other leaders were volatile. They whipped up caste feelings and infused self-respect and sense of survival among the people of their community. S. Ramadoss was also able to attract the teenagers and their youth into his fold. Vanniyar movement led by Ramadoss acquired all the external trappings of a political party. In his style of functioning the movement resembled

other dravidian parties. He also changed the old regimented policy of the 'Vanniyar Vottu Anniyarukku Illai'. No Vanniar would vote for other caste candidates. These circumstances and events led to the formation of the political party namely Pattali Makkal Katchi.

A careful observation of the agitation by the Vanniyar group led by Ramadoss over the years reveals that they ended in clashes with the Harijans in various places. Traditionally, the Vanniyars and Harijans belong to the same economic strata. Both are largely farm labourers. Normally , their numerical strength is found to be more or less equal in the districts where Vanniyars are concentrated. Given the same background, the Harijans receive relatively more concessions in educational institutions and Government employment under protective discrimination. The Vanniyars were aggrieved that they have not been accorded the kind, the quantum of concessions that is extended to the Harijans. But the fact is that while the S.Cs and S.T.s are the oppressed classes, with the stigma of untouchability, the Vanniyars claimed to belong to the Kshatriya group holding a status higher than the untouchables. Yet they wanted to be included in the category of backward classes, and later, have been included as the most backward class category mainly to improve their economic status.

Vanniyar Sangham branches sprang up like mushrooms providing ready shelter and encouragement to the people belonging to the caste. Likewise, the organisations of the 'Ambedkar Iyakkam', 'Ina - Viduthalai Iyakkam' and 'Viduthalai Siruthai Iyakkam' have established branches to support the causes of the SC's and ST's. There were frequent clashes between the Vanniyar and the Harijans as these associations grew in strength in North Arcot, South Arcot, Tanjore, Salem and Dharmapuri districts. There were communal clashes earlier also between Vanniyars and Reddiars and Vanniyars and Harijans, in these areas but they were mostly local conflicts. But with the growth of these associations it became more frequent and an overall atmosphere of fear and distrust still exists between them. They are more serious in South Arcot district. The leaders also whipped up communal passions by their fiery speeches.

The clashes were also due to the political affiliation and shelter that the Harijans extended to the political parties that were not supported by the Vanniyars.

This attitude of enmity of Vanniyars towards all political parties was fostered by the Vanniyar Sangham which became very popular. The basic difference in social status between the Vanniyars and the Harijans still remains. They have similar economic background but their life-styles are different. The Harijans are not regarded as socially equal to Vanniyars. This is evident from the practice that still exists of providing food and other things separately to the Harijans by the Vaniyars on festive occasions. Caste discrimination is still practised in the villages and rural areas, despite the fact that the reformist Dravidan parties have been ruling the State since 1967 and the Congress party has been projecting itself as a protector of the interest of the Harijans. Bur, it is not to say that the Vanniyars and Harijans have always been hostile to each other. In fact they have remained friendly except during the time of sporadic conflicts.

The leadership of the Vanniyar Sangham depended on their ability to articulate and represent their demands and project the objectives of their caste associations and to capture the imagination of the people of their area. Ramaswamy Padayatchi, Manickavelu Naicker, and of late, S.Ramadoss are instances in point. These people became leaders of local caste asssociation from which they moved to the state and national level leadership. The Vanniyar caste associations at various districts and local levels have remained very strong in their respective areas or regions. Whenever issues common to their entire community, like the reservation policy came up, all the local level groups united to present a common front. When the common issue became dormant, leadership conflict appeared once again for the formation of several sub-groups and segmental groups or associations within the same community under different titles. These groups within the organisation were also formed due to differences in local conditions which were peculiar to the localities and gained influence with the caste members of that locality. For example, in Tamil Nadu, there are Vanniya Kula Kshatrya Maha Sangham, Vanniya Peravai, Social Service Society (SSS), Nanbargal Nala Sangham, rural based Vanniyar Sangham and the urban based educated Vanniyar Youth Association. Its main concern is to improve the socio-economic and educational standards of the Vanniyars and to maintain matrimonial alliances among their own cast. There is a rivalry between these groups to get control over the ancient Maha Sangham trust.

These associations have convened several meetings and put forth their demands as and when needed. The 'SSS' meets on a particular day every week to discuss the progress made by its members. The various segmental and splinter organisations of the Vanniyars co-operate with one another and come together under a common banner, when their common interest are affected. But there is a rivalry when one or the other group comes close to the party in power.

Conclusion:

The Vanniyars organised themselves as a caste group in 1888 during the British rule to enhance their social status. After independence, the Vanniyars Sangham leaders organised into political parties namely Common Weal and Toilers Party which merged with Congress party after the 1952 elections. Vanniyars could not achieve their objectives while functioning under their caste based associations or political parties during the first decades after independence. Later, a number of caste based associations appeared on the political scene of Tamil Nadu. The Vanniyars also received their associations in the name of Vanniyar Sangham. Realilsing that only political parties could contest in elections and occupy positions of power,.they formed a political party in an effort to broaden their support base and to rope in other most backward communities. The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) thus formed hopes to win the elections so that they could fulfil the demands of their community since no existing political party could exclusively look after the needs of the Vanniars. But still Vanniars are members of other political parties also.

Even after the establishment of the P.M.K., the Vanniyar Sangham still continues to exist as an active caste group. It indicates that the caste loyalties are strong and they have the primary claim on their members support. Though there are group conflicts within the caste group, they come together and put up a united fight when the interest of the community is involved. The tactics adopted by the Vanniyar Sangham clearly proves that the caste based social pressure group politics in Tamil Nadu has often been based on agitation. This is the most effective means of drawing the attention of the Government and the public. It has been proved as a successful weapon. The state is the biggest employer. Even

communication, power and transport are controlled by the Government. Education is either directly or indirectly controlled by the Government. As such, the Centre and State Governments are the biggest employers. The enormous increase in population and the subsidised education based on the system of reservation have created a large group of unemployed graduates. Hence, most of the demands of the groups are directed against the Government. Following the success of Vanniyar Sangham, a number of caste associations have been formed to function as pressure groups in order to project their demands. So the Vanniyar Sangham has shown the path for the other caste groups to form caste based pressure groups. The advantage of the Vanniar Community is that it is one of the earliest organized caste groups with a sizeable population. The social mobilization of this community has provided an opportunity to Ramadoss to enlarge its fold to accommodate other caste groups also in the PMK, with an ambition to capture power at the state level. These were the initial successes for his efforts particulary in wooing a few members of the SC Community; but social scientists and political analysts are not very optimistic to expect the dominant caste group of the PMK to give up the caste feeling and buildup caste-free PMK.

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLE OF CASTE ASSOCIATIONS : LESSONS FROM NADAR CASTE ASSOCIATIONS IN THIRUNELVELI DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

Dr. G. Karunanithi

The caste associations have been drawing the attention of several social scientists since the early twentieth century. They do manifold functions as any welfare organization does for the betterment of their members. Some of them are carrying out certain welfare activities, extending financial support to poor students, finding jobs for the unemployed graduates, solving problems at family and caste levels and the like. Though they are organized around the general theme of promoting the welfare of their members, they are very much concerned with improving their social status and also mobilizing them politically.

Goldhamer (1957:593) observes that a caste association is like a voluntary organization provided the former with specialized interest. Its specialization of interest would lead to its specialization in associational activites. Consequently, its members would tend to associate with one another in order to pursue common activites in respect of the relatively narrow segments of their total life activities.

Caste undergoes structural and functional changes in contemporary times as it is resilient. Therefore, it gets adapted to the changing situations in order to preserve its roots or rather core elements. This is stressed by M.N. Srinivas that the caste allows itself to assume new functions for its sustenance. He (1966:114) notes that the caste associations have adaptive mechanisms.

Rudaloph (1965:13) writes that caste associations function as a vehicle for internal cultural reform and external social change. They facilitate change from macro-society to micro-society. They also enable middle and lower castes to establish self-esteem and subsequently social esteem, first from the state, then the macro-society and from the micro-society of village and locality.

Like other caste associations, these three associations of Nadar community were organized with the aim of promoting the socio-econmic life of their members and to enforce integrity and morality among them. In addition to this, they are concerned with promoting the education of their caste children especially, children from poor economic background. Their educational programmes enable those children to get access to school and colleges which, in turn, would bring about occupational mobility later among the educated persons. As a result of this, they register progress in their economic pursuit which ultimately results in their social mobility. These associations mobilize funds to meet the educational needs of their caste children hailing from poor economic background. Sometimes, they extend financial support to certain bright students from such a background to pursue higher studies.

The assoications organize annual cultural programmes to encourage the students by giving them prizes for their educational achievements. In addition to this, they do identify children who have talents in sports, music and other such activities during such programmes and promote their talents by rewarding them suitably. For instance, besides these activities, the Nellai Nadar Uravin Murai has established a Higher Secondary School to promote the education of children in general and Nadar children in particular. Moreover, it has also proposed to start a college in Thirunelveli in the course of time for same purpose. In a similar way, the Catholic Christian Nadar Welfare Association has a regular practice of celebrating Christmas every year with the orphanage children and mentally or physically handicapped children or persons from the Home for Aged maintained by Christian Missionaries. During such an occasion, the association provides them with dinner, dress and gift packets. It also contributes a sizable amount of money to the institutions accommodating them.

In a similar way, those associations do extend financial support to poor parents from Nadar community to get their daughters married. It is found out that in their several letters addressed to the secretaries and presidents of the associations, they requested for financial help to solemnize their daughters'marriage. Besides this, the associations take initiative to arrange for

marriage alliance or rather marriage partners for their men and women. The free Marriage Information Bureau maintained by the Jawarharnagar Nadar Sangam and the Catholic Christian Nadar Welfare Associations is a case in point. The association has also started giving loans to their members for nominal interest to buy household appliances.

Another function assumed by the associations is to arrange for cremating dead persons from poor families irrespective of their caste. They do meet expenses towards funeral rituals. As a matter of fact, they do it as a kind of selfless social service which exhibits the humane quality imbibed by them.

An important function of the associations is to bring about integrity among their caste people. This is very much realized by the Nadar caste associations. That is perhaps the reason why they readily come forward to solve intra and inter-family conflicts among the Nadar community. It is reported that several such conflicts have been amicably solved by the associations since their time of formation. In a similar way, they are also interested in solving intra and inter caste conflicts in order to bring about harmony among their caste people in particular and all other caste people in general.

A few years ago, as a measure to develop the Nadars economically, their caste associations put forward a demand to the Tamil Nadu Government to include them in the list of Most Backward Castes. This shows that they would prefer to be in the lower rung of caste hierarchy provided they get access to Government provisions to improve their economic condition.

However, from the activities of those associations of Hindu as well as Christian Nadars discussed in this paper, it is evident that they try to fulfill the social, economic and educational needs of their members to an appreciable extent by discharging multifarious roles.

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CASTE ORGANISATIONS AND CASTE-BASED POLITICAL OUTFITS-CAN THEY CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL ENDS?

Dr. A. Shanmugam

Dr. N. Swaminathan

Introduction

This paper attempts to examine whether the recent spurt in caste organisations and caste-based political outfits in Tamilnadu is a healthy sign, and whether they can play a positive role in the socio-economic development of their members and of the State. This is a question that has engaged the attention of the scholars, concerned public and even politicians in the State for quite some time now. While the general reaction is one of cynicism, it is suggested here that what we need is an objective inquiry and not blanket judgements. We must here point out that this belief is in no way contradicted by the manner of phrasing of the question which forms the title of this paper. The phrasing is delibrate and has to do with a particular understanding of the patterns of political change in India over the past four decades as will be shown below.

Political mobilization of the caste and other traditional social cleavages has been and continues to be an integral part of politics in India since independence. It is for this reason that India's political life is often described by the Westerners as basically communal in nature. There is, therefore, nothing peculiar about the situation in TamilNadu. What is perhaps unique is the tremendous upsurge in caste organisations in recent years in a State which has been under the rule of the Dravidian political parties since the mid-sixties. Equally interesting is the fact that this should have happened despite the century-old Dravidian movement which is ideologically opposed to the caste system and seeks its dissolution. So, the caste organisations and caste-based political outfits, while being a common feature of politics in all parts of India, are particularly numerous in the political life of TamilNadu. Thus, if the Tamil Nadu situation differs from the rest of India, the difference is basically one of degree and not of kind, although, ofcourse, its uniqueness derives from its specific historical background. The question here is whether there is anything positive about these

organisations in terms of contribution to the socio-economic betterment of their members and the larger society or are they simply an anachronism, a manifestation of the ills plaguing the polity. The answer requires a survey of the patterns of political change in India (and TamilNadu, an integral part of India) during the past fifty years, which expalin why and how caste and other traditional social groups have been drawn into the political system at the rate and in the manner they have and with what consequences. This is discussed in the first of the three sections into which this paper is divided. The second section examines the reasons why caste has become such a central feature of politics in Tamil Nadu, despite its Dravidianist heritage and rule as to give rise to an unusally large number of caste organisations and caste-based political parties. Based on the discussion in the first two sections, the third section attempts to answer the question that has inspired this paper, namely, whether the mushrooming caste organisations and caste-based political outfits make or can make any positive contrbution either in terms of the socio-economic improvement of their members and thereby larger society or in other ways.

I

What kind of political change had characterized the Indian Republic since the Independence? Has it furthered demoracy and political development and thereby, the socio-economic progress of the nation? It is generally held by the scholars that the developing countries have little chance of sustaining democratic institutions. India, widely considered an exception to this belief in the 1950s and 1960s, is, according to experts, becoming increasingly difficult to govern, that it has been moving towards a crisis of goverhability over the past four decades. Atul Kohli, the Princeton Political Scientist, in a highly rated recent book on Indian Politics, has described and analysed this crisis. Kohli observes:

India is still... a functioning democracy, but increasingly it is not well governered. The evidence of eroding political order is everywhere. Personal rule had replaced party rule at all levels-national, state and district. Below the rulers, the entrenched civil and police services have been politicised. Various social groups have pressed new and ever more diverse political demands in demonstrations that often have led to violence. The omnipresent but feeble state in turn, has vacillated; its response have varied over a wide range:

indifference, spordic concession, and repression. Such vacillation has fuelled further opposition. The ineffectiveness of repression, moreover, has highlighted the breakdown of the civil machinery intended to enforce the law and maintain order. In order to protect themselves, citizens in some parts of the country have begun organizing private armies. The growing political violence has periodically brought the armed forces into India's political arena whereas the armed forces once were considered apolitical[1].

This picture as depicted by Atul Kohli points to the pervasive erosion of political order in the system. In talking about India's crisis of governability, Kohli uses the term 'crisis' not as a doomsayer would but only to draw attention to certain tendencies toward steady deterioration of the system. He does not predict an imminent breakdown of the system. He does, however, suggest that if the system continues to function without basic changes, its level of performance will remain low and will further decline. In the context of a democratic developing country like India, Kohli defines, 'governability' as the capacity of its government to do three things simultaneously: sustain its legitimacy, initiate solutions to pressing socio-economic problems and resolve political conflicts without force and violence. India's growing incapacity to perform these tasks is, what, according to Kohli, constitutes the governability.

Kohli identifies two trends that have been at work since independence as being responsible for the crisis. One is the growing democratization of traditional power relations in India's civil society in the wake of independence and the acceptance of a new constitution; and the other is the failure to establish a rational and an impersonal system of authority to generate new leadership through formal political institutions. The first points to certain features of the Indian State and their role in producing the crisis, in other words it directs our attention to structural reasons. The second points to the role of India's political leadership, the political elite in creating the mess we are in[2].

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1 Atul Khòli, Democracy and Discontent, [New York, Cambridge University press, 1991] P.3

2 Ibid., PP. 384-85.

Infact there are certain elements which are responsible for the ercsion of political order in India. The state in India is called upon not only to maintain law and order but also to bring the socio-economic development of its citizens. And this it has to do within a democratic framework and under conditions of economic scarcity and a low rate of economic growth. To fully grasp how this situation has conditioned and shaped the course of political development in India during the past fifty years, let us begin by noting the changes that independence and democracy brought about in traditional authority structure and a growing democratisation of power relations in the civil society. The dismantling of the traditional political order did not mean the automatic creation of a new basis for a new political order. The process, of course, was initiated by and shaped under a new set of modern democratic political institutions. The point, however, is that a traditional society requires time and education in the form of new and relevant political socialisation at the hands of its progressive elites, who have initiated the process of its modernisation before the new institutions can strike roots in the soil. Education here means not simply preaching but setting examples for the prople to emulate. And there is no way one can wish away the time element here. Till the process grows into a mature stage and starts delivering results in the form of transformation of a subject people into a body of citizens, the situation remains volatile. And the situation can be made quite complicated, if in addition the nascent institutions are called upon to assume and discharge commitments beyond their capacity-commitments that even political system with strong institutional foundation sometimes find difficult to cope with. For, in that case, i.e., when the State, as in India, has not only to maintain law and order but is also responsible for promoting socio-economic development, it becomes a highly interventionist state. When such a state is also organised as a democracy as has been the case in India, politics and political competition tend to become an integral part of much of social life. This is so for the following reasons: (1) The State becomes an object of enormous attention from various social groups living under conditions of scarcity and poverty and wanting to improve their socio-economic prospects, (2) Political parties and their leaders design their activities with a view to mobilising the support of various social groups and winning political power and in the process tend activities with a view to mobilising the support of various social groups and winning political power and in the process tend to heighten the expectations of

the various social groups vis-a-vis the state. The volatile nature of political life which is inevitable under conditions when a strong basis for an impersonal system of authority is yet to be created, become more volatile when an ever increasing number of individuals and social groups start interesting themselves in, and invading the State seeking benefits. This is precisely what has happened in India since independance especially since the mid-sixties.

Multiplying the demands on the political system from the society under conditions of low economic growth; weak and nascent political institutions rendered further weak by the power-seeking actions of political leaders- these two features of modern India's politics have widened the gulf between the State's capacity and its commitments- both in the area of maintaining political order and in respect of bringing about socio-economic improvements of its vast millions. The result: elected governments at all levels of the polity-national, state and as a consequence, have suffered serious erosion of their legitimacy irrespective of the parties that control them. This in turn has resulted in the increasing fragmentation of the political system, with established political parties-national as well as regional-suffering systematic break-up and countless number of new parties appearing on the scene. Most of these numerous smaller parties command very narrow social base restricted to one or two castes. Popular disaffection over the failure of elected governments to fulfil their demands has further resulted in both the discontent social groups as well as the state resorting to violence to solve political problems, the situation was not so bad during the first two decades after independence mainly because of the leadership provided by Nehru and his colleagues most of whom were exceptionally committed to the public good and were zealous in nurturing and strengthening the new democratic institutions. With the appearance on the scene of leaders with demogogic rather than programmatic appeal, the situation has totally changed as has been described above. Thus, the patterns of political change in India over the past more than three decades clearly points to rising popular disillusionment. An increasingly large amount of political activity is happening outside the established organisations based on other traditional social groups.

II

While caste organisations and caste-based political parties are thus a common feature of comtemporary India's politics, Tamilnadu, going by

impressionistics evidence, appears to be in the forefront in respect of the number of such organisations that have come up in recent years. The situation becomes especially puzzling when one recalls that the State is heir to a century-old non-Brahmin and Dravidian movements which have been and are ideologically opposed to the caste system and want its destruction. To make matters more interesting, ever since the fourth general elections the State has been under the rule of the Dravidian political parties. How does one explain this puzzle?

Tamilnadu is an integral part of the Indian Union. As such, the State has shared and been influenced by the structural features of the Indian state that, as we have seen, have shaped the political behaviour of the leaders and the masses in a big way. In other words, Tamilnadu has been steadily moving towards a crisis of governability, especially during the past nearly four decades. This however, does not mean that there has been a certain inevitability about leadership actions that have contributed to the crisis. During the first two decades after independence, the nation had the fortune to have leaders with exceptional commitment to public good. These were people who did not succumb to the temptation to exploit the fragile institutions of democracy and personalise political power. Rather they scrupulously nurtured the institutions in an effort to lay the foundation for a new, rational political order. Tragically, those who succeeded them both at the national as well as at the State levels put their own interests before those of the nation, tended to personalise political power, and in the process brought about the systematic erosion of the impersonal basis of the fragile institutions. In Tamilnadu itself, this process of deinstitutionalisation was initiated and commandeered in a big way under the rule of the Dravidian political parties. Evidence of the consequent erosion of political order in the state over the years is there for all to see. A steady fragmentation of the state's polity as borne out by the splitting up of the established dominant political parties and the birth of innumerable smaller parties, most of which are caste-based; an increasingly large chunk of the state's political activity happening outside of the established channels of authority, and directed by caste organisations and other pressure groups, often involving violent confrontation with the State and among themselves; growing politicisation of the civil and police services. The erosion of political in Tamilnadu is not less than in the rest of the country. Like in other parts of India, in Tamilnadu too, this phenomenon includes, among other things, the rise of caste associations and

their aggressive involvement in politics. Infact, Tamilnadu may be said to be leading the other states in this respect. The question however is that why this should have happened in a State with a long history of a political movement ideologically opposed to the caste system and committed to its destruction.

During the post-independence period, the D.M.K. emerged as the harbinger of Tamil ethnicity and nationhood. The Dravidian movement originally took off from the earlier non-Brahmin movement which arose in the early years of the last century. The state's forward non-Brahmin elite started the movement in an attempt to increase their numbers in various governmental avenues which were dominated by the Brahmins who formed just a little more than three percent of the population. Ideologically, the movement sought to construct and promote a Dravidian identity on the basis of a radical definition of the common origin of non-Brahmins linked to the concepts of non-Brahmins and Sudras. The movement which was spearheaded by the Justice Party during most of the colonial period, thus emphasised the Dravidian identity of the non-Brahmins and developed an anti-Brahmin ideology. The Justice Party's political support came from the newly urbanized non-Brahmins who, according to Marguerite Ross Barnett, "rejected Home Rule and territorial nationalism, emphasising the primarcy of Dravidian cultural authenticity, a common non-Brahmin identity, and an incipient Dravidian cultural nationalism". Behind this ideological facade however one could see the straightforward class interest of the non-Brahmins providing the motive force for the movement. The British, initially, were inclined favourably towards the Justice Party, as they found in it a useful tool to undercut the growing nationalist movement which had demonstrated an ability to mobilise opposition to colonial rule cutting through the traditional social divisions. The Justice Party proved so effective in mobilising the support of the non-Brahmin community made up of numerous backward castes that in the first elections under the Montague-Chemlsford Reforms, held in 1920, it was returned by a large majority and formed its ministry in the Province. The Party won the elections held to the second Legislative Council in 1923, defeating the Swarajist wing of the Congress Party. Though it lost to the Swarajists in the third Council in 1926, it made a clean sweep in the elections of 1930. The Justice Party rule and the movement it represented brought about the ascendancy of the forward non-Brahmin elite in the socio-economic terrain as

evidenced by their growing numbers in various governmental avenues. The Justice Party however, despite its claim that it existed for the welfare of the non-Brahmin community as a whole as well as those of the Adi-dravidas, did in practice paid little attention to the concerns of the submerged and marginalised sections of the community. Its activities came to be focussed exclusively upon improving the prospects of the high caste non-Brahmins. The disillusionment felt by the deppressed castes with the Justice Party led to the emergence of its more radical wing, the Self-Respect League in 1925 under the leadership of E.V.Ramasamy, popularly known as Periyar [the 'great sage']. Although Periyar vigorously championed the cause of the backward castes, the popular base of the Self-Respect League never extended to cover a sizable segment of the untouchables and backward caste population. The Justice Party declined as a political force in the 1930s and underwent a major reorganisation by being integrated with the Self-Respect League in 1944 and took the form of a new party - the Dravidar Kazhagam under the leadership of EVR. Dravidar Kazhagam denounced Hinduism as an inherently inegalitarian ideology. It opposed the Hindu religion and the inequitous caste system which it had created with great ferocity. The D.K. suffered a split in 1949 leading to the formation of the DMK by Annadurai and his supporters. The reason for the split lay in the fact that Annadurai and his followers within the DK wanted to enter into electoral politics, and therefore, stressed the need to mobilise, at the mass level, the backward caste Hindu communities. Periyar was vehemently opposed to this and hence the split. With the emergence of the DMK, control over Provincial politics began moving away from the Brahmins and the entrenched high-caste non-Brahmins

However, the Justice Party phase of the Dravidian movement was based upon a radical definition of common origin of non-Brahmins as opposed to Brahmins. The achievement of this phase of the movement was restricted to the uplift of the high caste non-Brahmins and never addressed the task of creation of a single, cohesive non-Brahmin community with its identity rooted in opposition to Brahmins and all that they stood for in cultural and historical terms. The movement's failure to address this task during this phase is all the more interesting in the light of the fact that the construction of the alternative identity was not attempted in vacuum but was based on a conception of the superiority of Tamil

culture, civilization and language over the Sanskritic and the Hindu civilization. The second phase of the movement, led by Periyar witnessed a broadening of the movement. The Self-Respect League and the DK launched a frontal attack on the Brahmins, the Hindu religion and the inequitous caste system. It further demanded a separate Dravidanadu - a Dravidian land. The programme also included, to some extent, the propagation of an atheistic and rationalistic philosophy. Despite the fact that he stuck to his openness till the end. Periyar too failed to advance the process of a new identity formation among the non-Brahmins of Tamilnadu and for two reasons : one, he steadfastly refused to expose the DK to electoral politics; and two, he had to contend with the reality of the electoral victory of the Congress and the fact that the State was being fairly well administered by the Congress government. The dilemma in fact led him to support the non-Brahmin Congress Ministry of Kamaraj Nadar [a short-lived on, though]. However his justification of Kamaraj as good and the Centre [Congress] as bad did not take him very far. Annadurai was caught in the same dilemma after a decade of radical posturing during which he headed a secessionist movement that reaffirmed the pre-eminence of Tamil content and context within the earlier Dravidian framework. It was this which led him to effect a significant shift in the politics of the DMK vis-a-vis the earlier Dravidian ideology. A linguistic definition of commonality replaced the concepts of non-Brahmins and Sudras as the determinants of the Tamil identity in the early sixties. The DMK further deradicalized its ideological position by giving up secession and opting for autonomy instead. Still from the Justice Party to the Self-Respect movement to the DK and the DMK, a continuity can be seen despite several differences: an emphasis on Tamil culture and the distinctiveness of Tamils as a people. This continuity in the ideological evolution of the Dravidian movement has not however led to the formation of a new identity among the non-Brahmins of Tamilnadu who constitute 96 percent of the state's population. From the time the control of the state's polity passed in to the hands of the DMK, the Dravidian political parties have used [or misused] this ideological continuity for invoking the bogey of Brahmin domination, (even after the Brahmins, in the mass politics of the post independence era, were reduced to an inconsequential minority in numerical terms in the electoral arena. Among the other planks of the Dravidian ideology i.e the anti-Centre, anti-

North and the anti-Hindi planks, the first two have lost their edge considerably in the course of the dynamics of national politics during the last decade while with the adoption of the two-language formula in the State, the last too has faded from political significance. Thus the Dravidian political parties have been left with little else of value other than their 'Brahmin domination' plank in their ideological kitty. In fact this plank too has, over the years become increasingly irrelevant But that has not discouraged the two premier Dravida parties from latching themselves on to it for the following reasons: one, the Dravidian movement has evolved from the non-Brahmin movement of the early 20th century; and although the Dravidian movement has undergone many changes over the years, its links with the ideology of the earlier movement have not been completely obliterated. Evidence that the influence of the original non-Brahmin movement is still there is found in the fact that one of the numerous, caste-based smaller political parties that have recently appeared on the political horizon of Tamilnadu bears the name 'New Justice Party'. Secondly, the two Dravidian parties that found that they could use the Brahmin domination plank although now only in subtler ways for shoring up their largely populistic programme of governance in ideological terms. Let us see how.

One of the significant aspects of the populistic governance of the Dravidian ruling classes has always been with respect to the issue of reservation for the OBCs. Two crucial elements of this issue are extension of the list of castes included in the OBC category and augmenting the percentage of the overall quota for the OBCs. These two areas of the contentious reservation issue have been fully and effectively utilised by both the DMK and the AIADMK to account for a significant portion of their populism and thereby preserve their hold on power. And they could not have succeeded in this endeavour without invoking periodically the theme of 'Brahmin domination' and the inequitous caste system in some form or other. For how else could they have justified a policy of reservation for the OBCs which measures backwardness not in terms of income but on the basis of caste. One would do well to remember here that the OBCs constitute anywhere between 60-70 percent of the State's population. Not that the beneficiary groups among the OBCs have ever demanded or likely to do so, justification from the government before accepting the benefits. Being beneficiaries they have, naturally, developed a stake in the system. If any change in the system is likely to happen

in the near future, it can only be in the direction of separate quotas for the different castes that make up the large OBC population. A switch over to the income criterion at this late stage is simply unthinkable. The AIADMK government led by M.G.Ramachandran tried to reform the situation in 1980, when it introduced an economic criterion seeking to remove the creamy layer. The income ceiling for eligibility to seek benefits was fixed at Rs.9000/- p.a. The DMK which was the main opposition party in the Assembly at that time whipped up public sentiments against the proposal. Soon, the 1980 elections to the Lok Sabha were held and the AIADMK lost all but two seats that it contested. Interpreting his party's rout in the elections as an adverse reaction to his new reservation scheme, MGR backtracked. He not only withdrew the proposal but went one step further and raised the quota for the backward castes to 50 percent and thus disarmed his opponents. Competitive populism as practised by the DMK and the AIADMK to outwit one another has thus ensured that caste as the basis of reservation for the OBCs will remain intact.

But the policy of caste-bsed reservation which forms an important feature of the populist programme of the DMK and AIADMK could not check the rising popular discontent. Within every caste included in the OBC list, the non-beneficiaries far outnumber the beneficiaries. Besides, the basic problems of the poor have largely remained unsolved under the governments of both the DMK and the AIADMK. In fact it was this popular disaffection against the DMK government of Karunanidhi which gave birth to the AIADMK. People enthusiastically supported MGR to fill the bill. Because he was more of a charismatic leader than Karunanidhi. MGR ruled the State for more than a decade.

With his demise, the problem became aggravated. Both the DMK and the AIADMK suffered fragmentation. Politically mobilised sections belonging to the large OBC population in the State who have not benefitted in the least from three decades of populistic governance which included the policy of caste-based reservation, proved fertile soil for politically ambitious caste leaders. The result was the birth of innumerable caste associations and caste-based political parties. The PMK which started off as Vanniar Sangam and registered phenomenal growth within a decade led the way. In brief, political mobilisation for electoral purposes

of dissatisfied social groups within the different castes belonging to the OBC population by politically ambitious leaders has resulted in the birth of these caste organisations. The emergence of these associations and parties is not a healthy sign. They are in fact a manifestation of the increasing fragmentation of the civil society in Tamilnadu. And given the fact that they have come in to existence as a result of mobilization for electoral purposes by ambitious politicians, they are not likely to make any meaningful contribution to the socio-economic condition of their members. What has been lacking is improvement in the economic condition of the poorer, depressed classes who constitute the great majority of the State's population. Three decades of populist rule have dried up the resources. The failure to create a clearer context of opposition between haves and have-nots and the attempt to disguise it by citing the caste system as the root cause of all the evils are at the root of the mushrooming of caste organisations in Tamil Nadu in recent years.

Caste Movements and Social Change : A Study of Ayyankali Movement in Kerala

Dr. J. Prabhash

In societies where social status, economic position and political power depend on birth, people belonging to the lowest tiers could gain access to state power to the extent to which they succeed in altering the terms of their depriviation and destroying the institutions which perpetuate them. An a priori condtion for this is the capacity of the deprived social categories to mobilise themselves socially and politically. And it so happens that since the criteria of exclusion is birth, the same becomes the rallying point for mobilisation as well. Thus conceived, social movements based on castes become the most authentic vehicles of mobilisation for the subaltern sections, particularly in the early stages of their social development.

However, as the depriviations are multiple, and as the movements themselves suffer many inherent weaknesses - for instance, lack of resources, absence of a strong educated middle Class and leadership - their potential for success is often limited. Added to this is the fragmentation and disunity among the subaltern population due to ethnic / caste differentiation. The history of Dalit movement in India best illustrates this.

Needless to say that the depriviations the Dalits had to suffer were (still are) multiple. They were excluded and exploited socially, economically and politically (Figure 1). There is a dialectical relationship between all these dimensions of depriviation and any attempt at bringing reform or change in one of these dimensions may only succeed in bringing a temporary alteration in the status of these people but in the long run this change may get either weakened or reabsorbed into the status quo system of exploitation.[1] As such, resistance against this had to be comprehensive and holistic in nature in the sense that it had to aim at socio-economic equality and political participation. However, it is doubtful whether the Dalit movements, from the Mahar movement in Maharashtra to the Jatava movement in Agra, so far succeeded in chartering such a course. For, none of them had the resources including the support of a powerful educated

middle class and internal cohesion for sustained action against a deeply entrenched and exploitative socio-political order. The Ayyankali movement which took place in Travancore, the erstwhile Princely State of Kerala, between the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries had also faced a similar situation.

Figure : 1

Types of Deprivation, Identity and Styles of Mobilisation : The Dalits

Sources of deprivation	Types of Identities	Nature of oppre-ssion	Patterns of Mobilisation
Degrading ritual status	Untouchable	Socio-cultural repression	Social reform movements for social equality
Powerless-ness	Subject	Political dis-enfranchisement	Mobilisation for political participation
Poverty	Slave	Economic exploitation	Bargaing for the betterment of economic condition

Source : T.K. Oomen, 'Sources of depriviation and styles of protest : the case of Dalits in India', **Contribution to Indian Sociology,** vol.18, Nos.1, 1984, p.46.

Ayyankali Movement

Among the Dalit movements in Kerala, Ayyankali movement, the one organized by Ayyankali, the greatest leader of the Scheduled Castes in the State, stands out in bold relief. It was both anti-feudal and anti-caste. It aimed at transforming the Dalits from their status as untouchables - subjects - slaves into citizens by creating a new Dalit self and identity. To achieve this, he chartered a course of action consisting of challenging religious taboos and demeaning customs; mass mobilisation and institutionalizing it through caste organization; and resorting to direct action like striking work (Figure 2).

Figure : 2

Dalits : Mode of Action and Extent of Social Change

Status	Mode of Action	Result
Degrading ritual status (Untouchable)	Flouting religious taboos and demeaning caste laws	Giving up demeaning religious practices; dressing neatly;occupying public spaces
Lack of Political Power (Subjects)	Mass mobilisation & constituting a community through caste organ.	Right to education; representation in Assembly; and appointment in the Civil Service.
Poverty (Slaves)	Striking work (Agricultural workers strike)	More wage and better terms of employment

It is true that Ayyankali was profoundly influenced by Sree Narayan Guru. However, unlike Guru, he never coined any slogans, nor did he manipulate religion to negate the inhuman social code that every religion was instrumental in establishing. Similarly unlike Ambedkar, Ayyankali never advocated disengagement with Hinduism. He was also not an anti-governmentarian. But at the same time from the sequence of the agitations organized by Ayyankali, it seems that he had a better sense of priority. As the agitations progressed demands came changing. His initial concern was to establish the right of his people to use public roads and appear in public places; subsequently, it drifted towards their right to education; and finally towards right to political representation and dress neatly. All these were essentially related to the development of a new Dalit self. That it was in these spheres that he used the riot-methods (violence) to attain the desired result, shows the importance he had attached to them.

Using public roads and appearing in public places were crucial from the point of view of the Scheduled Castes becuase these were the stepping stones to the mainstream of the society. With this idea in mind, Ayyankali organized a series of pedestrian marches and, in one instance, even dared to make a

bullockcart ride (1893), then an exclusive privilege of the feudal elements. In the course of these events, he had to face stiff resistance from the caste Hindus and in some places even from Ezhavas. Riots broke out in many places[2] viz., Balarampuram and Chaliya Street (1889), Aralummoodu (1898) and Nedumangadu (1912). Similar riots were also reported from Chennithala, Kazhakootam, Kovalam, Nemom and Manacadu.[3] The geographical spread of the agitation shows the extent of success attained by Ayyankali in making the issue a focal point of mass mobilisation eventually forcing governmental intervention in favour of the SCs.

Education was another or his absorbing concerns. That he had a very good grasp of the importance of education in social mobility was clear from the encouragement he had given in establishing libraries and night schools for the benefit of his people[4] and his proposal to the Govénment that elementary education be made compulsory for them.[5] This was no small thing, when looked at from the context of the value system prevalent hundred years ago.

Ayyankali's first move in the area of education was to open schools exclusively for the Scheduled Castes and one such school was established in Vengannoor in 1904. However he gave up his plan later due to resistance from the caste Hindus and thereafter directed his attention towards securing admission for the children of his community in Government schools along with the children of the **Savarnas**. But when this was also opposed by the same conservative social forces he resorted to a new mode of action - strike by agriculture workers.

The workers belonging to the Scheduled Castes, especially **Pulayas,** were forbidden from engaging in agricultural work for **Savarna** landlords. Demands such as wage increase and six day week were also raised. The strike continued for one full year (1907-8) and was meticulously planned. Those who tried to violate the ban were forcibly restrained, but at the same time steps were taken to ensure alternative sources of employment for the striking workers by entering into a deal with the fisher folk of the coastal areas. In the end a tripartite agreement was reached between Ayyankali, caste Hindu lanlords and the Government whereby SC children were granted permission to attend schools. The strike was certainly not the product of any class consciousness,[6] but by inducing the Dalit to use it as a forceful political weapon, Ayyankali succeeded in creating in them

a new consciousness.[7] He thus challanged the feudal relations in agriculture and showed his men that there was nothing sacrosanct in their relationship with **Jenmies**.[8]

Subsequently, efforts were also made to challenge caste restrictions in dressing. Recall here that in the caste hierarchy the mode of dressing and caste, as both were attached to body, had an inverse relationship,[9] dressing neatly and appropriately the prerogative of the superior castes and dressing shabbily and inappropriately the duty of the lower castes. Viewed thus, dress seperated the lord from the serf. This was one of the basic reasons why almost all Backward Caste Movements in India reacted sharply to dress restrictions. Ayyankali had also asked his people to dress neatly and sufficiently and exhorted women to give up the practice of wearing stone necklaces, a mark of subjugation. As in the case of schooling, here also there was resistance from the caste Hindus. However, he overcame this with the help of progressive leaders belonging to these sections. With this he successfully completed the first phase of his agitation at the end of which Ayyankali, like acid on steel, carved out a little social space for the Dalits in the conservative and caste-ridden social terrain of Travancore. To provide them their due in the political sphere became his next concern. This he tried to fulfill through organizing them into a community. Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) was the result of such a project.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Ayyankali was the development of a social praxis for the mobilisation of his people. But in this process he also attempted at the construction of a Dalit identity by organizing them into a community, though indirectly. The struggle for claiming public space and ending social indignities gradually brought together people of various Dalit groups, and this later became the basis of identity formation.

Infact, on the basis of the available historical materials, it could be inferred that he had a faint idea about the need for this even before he started mass mobilisation programmes, for in his youth itself he was seen organizing people around cultural symbols. He collected a motely crowd of youths of his caste belonging to the neighbouring villages and encouraged them to perform folk-arts, besides giving them training in martial arts. In their private theatre they performed **Pattukachery, Parijakali, Kolkali, Kurathiattom, Kakkarassi** Drama and **Valli**

Drama, all of these the folk performances of Dalits in Kerala.[10] This was his first lession in identity construction and it got crystallized with subsequent mass mobilisations. Finally the organization of Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham helped form the structural requirements of this transformation into a community with diverse constituting factors.[11]

Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham and the Building of a Community

The Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham was established in 1907 to lend organizational support to his social programmes and to mobilise the entire Scheduled Castes under one flag by Ayyankali. At its inception and for a substantial period thereafter, it drew its strength from the entire SC fraternity, Hindus as well as Christians. Though he was opposed to conversion,[12] Ayyankali had no hesitation to bring the converts also into the fold of his organization. His credential in this regard was proved beyond doubt by three crucial factors: the original bye law of SJPS clearly revealed that the association was meant to cater to the interests of the SCs of various denominations including converts.[13] At the leadership level of the organ also there were Dalits of all hues; and in the prayer recited in the Sunday meetings of the organization one finds Lord Sree Ramakrishna and Jesus Christ being referred to as one and the same.[14]

The Sangham was also noted for its democratic character and gender friendliness. According to its bye-law, the office bearers were to be democratically elected and decisions were to be arrived at on the basis of the majoritarian principle.[15] Much more, women were encouraged to participate in its proceedings.[16] In this respect, SJPS made a drastic departure from all other pre-independent social organizations in Kerala. The salience of this move could be comprehended fully only if one sees the point that much before the Brahmins or for that matter castes above the SCs brought their women from the interior of their homes to the public sphere, Ayyankali did it. This was indeed a revolutionary step when viewed against the context of the social mores of the 20th century Kerala, and that too as it came from an illiterate lowest casteman.

Another novel feature of Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham was the etablishment of Community Courts. Ayyankali established at the headquarters

(Vengannoor) of the Sangham a court to try and settle complaints of his castemen. It had all the paraphernalia of a regular court with its advocates, judges, bench clerks etc. One basic reason behind this experiment was to put an end to his people's dependence for justice on regular courts manned by the caste Hindus in whom he had little faith. It was also expensive and time consuming. Further he also found in it a clever way to associate his people with the Sangham. The working of the court was coordinated by the units of the Sangham and this helped a great deal in making the community.[17]

As stated elsewhere, the primary purpose for whcih SJPS was established was to place the Dalits in the political realm of Travancore. The effort bore fruit soon. In 1911 P.K.Govinda Pillai was nominated as the representative of the Scheduled Castes to the Sri Mula Praja Sabha - legislature - and on December 5, Ayyankali himself became its member, a position in which he continued until 1933.[18] Soon many other members of the community found their way to the sabha. Charakan Solomon (Dalit Christian, 1913), Vallikkara Chothi (Pulaya, 1914), Kandan Kumaran (Paraya, 1915) Paradi Abraham Isaac (Dalit Christian, 1916), Kurumban Daivathan (Pulaya, 1917), M.M.Ratna Swamy (Sambava, 1921), Polikayil Yohannan (Dalit Christian, 1921) and Pampady John Joseph (Dalit Christian, 1922) were a few other notables who adorned the House.[19] Ayyankali and his associates raised many critical issues pertaining to land, housing, education, employment and agriculture in the House[20] and in some areas - for instance education and land question - attained moderate success as well.[21]

Parallel to the expansion of SC representation in the House one also witnessed a different trend emerging within Dalit fraternity-internal schism. The representatives soon began to argue the case of their respective sub-castes upsetting the process of identity building. Even a great leader like Ayyankali was heard arguing the cause of Hindu Scheduled Castes, Pulayas in particular, in the Assembly towards the end of his career.[22] And in 1937 Sadhu Jana Parpalana Sangham itself came to a virtual end with the formation of All Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha by T.T. Kesava Sasthri, son-in-law of Ayyankali.

Further it is also noticed that since his induction to the legislature, Ayyankali did not initiate any serious mass mobilisation programmes except the

ones organized in connected with school admission (1914) and wearing of stone beads by the women folk (1915). Stranger still was his absence in the struggles for democractic governance in Travancore. It could be argued as was done by many, Chentharassery and Abhimanyu for instance, that at that point of time Ayyankali could not afford to render a critique of Government as many of the items on his agenda were those which could be fulfilled only with the active support of the State. While this was definitely true, it also exposed the inherent weakness of his movement.

In comparison to Sree Narayana Movement, Ayyankali Movement did not have either the leadership potential or the social resource to fall back on. In Sree Narayana Guru the **Ezhavas** had (still have) a charismatic spiritual leader and in people like Dr. Palpu, Kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan, C.V. Kunjuraman, C. Kesavan etc. a long array of powerful social and political leaders. They had also a strong educated and economically powerful middle class.[23] Ayyankali Movement lagged behind in all these indicators. Without disrespect towards other Dalit leaders one could state that the **Dalits** in Travancore, perhaps in the whole of Kerala, had a great leader only in Ayyankali. **Dalit** Movement did not produce a second level leadership. Moreover Ayyankali did not have around him atleast a paltry of English educated men, who were economically viable enough to be included even in the lower middle class category. Kathleen Gough subtly brings out this in her study of the Palakkara village. She says:

> The Palakkara Harijans shook off feudal religious forms much later than the Ezhavas (and much less effectively). This was probably because they were restricted to landless labour under high caste masters, because of the universal social discrimination against them, and because of their confinement within a small-scale rural setting, their illiteracy and their lack of an urban bourgeoisie.[24]

These objective historical conditions cast their shadow on the growth prospects of the movement. As a consequence, Ayyankali Movement was forced to operate within the framework of authority created by the Royal power.[25] But this in its turn had affected the internal solidarity of the movement further weakening it and leading to its eventual decimation. As the movement began to depend on the Royal power for its sustenance it soon came to be co-opted by the State

inaugurating a process of competition among the movement partners for its patronage. On the other side, the State was also found plotting against **Dalit** solidarity by first cutting a wedge between Hindu **Dalits** and their Christian counterparts and then trying to close the ranks among the various sub-castes within the Hindu Dalit fraternity.[26] Thus the interface with the State itself became a factor which retarded the identity building process and the possible unity of **Dalits** cutting across caste and religion.[27]

Here it is worthwhile to note that between themselves Ayyankali and Sree Narayana Movements failed in bridge-building with the result that a broader front of all the oppressed against the oppressors did not evolve. Rigidity of the caste system and the differential in socio-economic and ritual status might have been the restraining factors. In a sense this had been the fate of all Backward Caste Movements elsewhere in India also. Thus they became anti-Brahmin (anti-upper caste) more than anti-caste.[28] As far as Dalit Movements of Travancore were concerned this proved fatal.

Under the cumulative impact of the above factors, the **Dalit** Movements in Kerala failed to bring about any drastic changes in the socio-political plane of the State. It also failed in constructing a **Dalit** identity though it had made a brave attempt at it. Neither could it evolve a critique of the existing structure of the economy so as to salvage the **Dalits** from the margins of political economy.[29] However, this should not be taken to mean that it was a thorough failure. As stated earlier, it had its definite silver-linings and this consisted in giving the oppressed a face-lift. It gave them self-respect and placed them in the social and political terrafirma of Travancore. It obtained for them three basic rights: right to appear in public places decently dressed; right to education and the right to be represented in the Government, no mean achievement when viewed against the pre-independent feudal context.

What remained to be achieved was to win for them economic deliverance, adequate representation in the structures of power and sufficient social acceptance. For this they had to be further mobilised. While the Communist Movement succeeded to a great extent in this regard no Dalit movement after Ayyankali Movement could make any significant dent in the mobilisation front. This is not because of any dearth in associations among these people but due

to the lack of social unity among them. All other factors which are pointed out as reasons for the failure of the Ayyankali Movement are also still relevant even after fifty years of independence. It is true that a tiny middle class section has emerged among the Dalits. But they are hardly seen extending a helping hand to their less fortunate brethren. To the majority of them the issue is one of realigning with the mainstream society.

Conclusion

Viewed in the above context it is high time that the Dalits put an end to the practice of internal segregation. Inter sub-caste differential is the one that calls for urgent attention. They have to overcome this by promoting brotherhood and solidarity through inter-sub-caste marriage. In the matter of regional differences, while it would be well-nigh impossible to transcend them physically they could be confronted at the intellectual and ideological plane. For this, a radical democratic ideology has to be developed. It has to be radical in the sense that it ought to be progressive, and democratic in the sense that it ought to be inclusive (it has to have enough space for all oppressed categories across castes and religions). This is both a caste and class like situation, caste like since it involves the ethnic mobilisation of Dalits and class like as it seeks to forge a common front of all the oppressed. This looks like ala Phule and Marx combined.

A hegemonic role for the Dalits in the whole process is also of critical importance. As an oppressed category on their own right, they are in a vantage position to spearhead and lent leadership and ideology to it. Any move in the contra direction (leadership mainly or solely by the non-SC sections) would be an eye-wash and a repetition of history. This, however should not be taken to mean that the leadership should be totally Dalit. By implication this only means that they ought to be in a position to guide the destiny of such movements.

The support of the Dalit elites has also to be enlisted. Being educated and holding positions of power, these people are in a better position to understand the pulse of their people and the larger society outside. They have to mobilise their people physically and ideologically, link them with similarly situated sections outside their fold and place both of them in the orbit of the national mainstream.

At some point of time, the Dalit Movement has also to reach out to other progressive political forces, political parties in the main. For, every battle for emancipation is fought in the political society and every such war could be successfully waged only with the help of progressive political forces. All these point towards the difficult and arduous journey the new social movements in general and Dalit Movements in particular have to undertake. The deliverance of the Dalits thus depends on the extend of success of these movements in this regard.

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6. T.K. Oommen, From Mobilisation to Institutionalisation: The Dynamics of Agrarian Movement in Twentieth Century Kerla, Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1985, p.62.

7. P. Sanal Mohan, 'Dalit Discourse and the Evolving New Self: contest and Strategies', Lateral Study Series, No.13, Kottayam: School of Social Sciences, M.G.University, n.d., p.34.

8. Ibid., p.35.

9. Ibid., p.36.

10. Joseph Mathew, Ideology, Protest and Social Mobility : Case Study of Mahars and Pulayas, NewDelhi: Inter India Publications, 1986, p.109. Also see Abhimanyu, op.cit pp.53-54.

11. Sanal Mohan, op.cit. p.38.

12. Abhimanyu, op.cit., p.73.

13. Interview with P. Sasidharan, Grandson of Ayyankali, on 31 March 1999.

14. For one such poem see Abhimanyu, op.cit., p.159.

15. Interview with Sasidharan, op.cit.

16. Abhimanyu, op.cit., p.154

17. Sanal Mohan. op.cit., p.46.

18. He resigned his membership of the Assembly on health grounds in February 1933.

19. Girijadamajan, op.cit., p.12.

20. Rao, op.cit., p.15.

21. Oommen, op.cit., p.64.

22. For details see Sanal Mohan, op.cit., p.24.

23. There were among the Ezhavas three times as many merchants as among Nairs, the total amounting to 42, 438 persons in 1931. Besides they counted 2,326 Lawyers, Doctors and Professors, 346 Public Officials and 5201 English educated. For details see Francois Hourtart and Genevieve Lemercinier, 'socio-Religions Movements in Kerala : A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production Part I', **Social Scientist,** Vol.6, No.11, June 1978, pp.11-18. Also see Oommen, op.cit./ p.65.

24. Kathleen Gough, 'Palakkara : Social and Religious Change in Central Kerala' in K. Ishwaran (ed.), Change and Continuity in Indian Villages, New York Columbia University Press, 1970, pp.160-61.

25. P.K. Michael Tharakan, 'Socio-Religious Reform Movements, Process of Democratisation and Human Development : The Case of Kerala, South-West India' in Lars Rudebeck and Olle Tornquist with Virgilio Rojas (eds.), Democratisation in The Third World, Concrete Cases in Contemporary and Theoretical Perspective, Uppasala : Uppasala University, 1996, p.132.

26. For instance we find Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer himself mediating between the leaders of various Dalit organizations and even encouraging them to unite under the banner of one umbrella association. It was true that he had his own vested interest in doing so as he wanted to swell the ranks of the governmentarians vis-a-vis the Ezhava, Christian and Muslims communities who were struggling for civic rights.

27. Sanal Mohan, op.cit., p.44.

28. Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, 'The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period', **Economic and Political Weekly,** Vol.XIV, Nos. 7 and 8, February 1979, p.415.

29. Sanal Mohan. op.cit., p.49.

S.N.D.P. YOGAM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN KERALAM

Dr. C.N. Somarajan

Although ancient Keralam was a land of social equality and social mobility particularly upto the eighth century A.D. it had lost its originality by the 11th century and that there emerged in the area a highly stratified and rigidly compartmentalised social structure based almost on the chathurvarnya model, so that by the last quarter of the 19th century Swami Vivekananda called Keralam 'a mad house of caste', depriving even a mediocum of human rights to a vast majority of the population, but at the same time providing ample opportunities to a microscopic minority to establish its domination over the entire land and people. However, by 1936, Mahatma Gandhi called Keralam a 'pilgrim centre', and by the close of the 20th century the state had become a model for socio-economic development. In spite of the fact that there were a number of movements, institutions, individuals and so on contributing to such a development. The most enduring services in this respect have been rendered by social organisations, of which the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S.N.D.P) is the foremost.

As the S.N.D.P. Yogam, since its inception in 1903, had brought about meaningful socio-economic change in Keralam, a look back into its social settings will enable one to appreciate the organisation properly. Since the establishment of the social domination of the Brahmins in Keralam particularly after the 11th century, there emerged in the state a highly stratified and rigidly compartmentalised social structure consisting of a large number of castes and sub-castes'. More and more castes and sub-castes were created for the self-interest of the priestly class, ultimately resulting in the division or classification of the Hindu population into two social categories, namely, savarnas or caste-Hindus, supporters and practitioners of the caste system and avarnas or non-caste Hindus, the sufferers and victims of the caste system.[2] The Brahmins (Nampootiris), the Kshatriyas and the Sudras (Nairs) belonged to the first and the Ezhavas, Pulayas, Parayas, etc. belonged to the second.

Caste and sub-castes were arranged in a hierarchical order from the highest and the most sacred to the lowest and the least worthy. This hierarchy

was maintained by two religious ideas. The first, that of incarnation, comforted the avarnas for present sufferings by assuring them an advance in the hierarchy, if they obeyed and observed caste laws which held them down to their present position. The second was that the lower defiled the higher in a spiritual and ritual sense. Since the Nampootiris were alleged to be the highest and the most sacred caste, all others, including the Kshatriyas, were regarded as polluting, either by touch or by approach or both. The Kshatriya was, therefore, compelled to keep a distance of two feet áway from Nampootiris.[4] The social distance to be observed by others were prescibed to bé- Nairs 16 feet, Ezhavas 32 and Pulayas 64. The very sight of the Nayadi would force a "Brahmin to undergo ritual purification".[5] In addition to this, all these social groups had to keep some specified distance from each other according to the position each occupied in the social hierarchy.

Untouchability in Keralam had assumed various and curious forms; not even the realm of language was exempt from it. As Professor S.N.Sadasivàn observes, "Untouchability demands for its effectiveness servile, self-effacing terminology in everyday person to person contact and communication... The terminology is of two sets, the one for the lower orders for their conscious self-degradation and the other for the higher castes for catering extravagantly to their ego." A vocative a Sudra should use to a Nambootiri and Kshatriya or Samanta ruler is 'Tirumeni' (divine body or your divinity) or 'Tampuran' (god), and for' yes' the word 'ran' or 'adiye' (your slave in obedience or slavishly yours) should be repeatedly mentioned. For every part of the Nambootiri's or Kshatriya's body, he should prefix 'tiru' or divine as he mentions it like 'tirukannu' (divine eye) and 'tiru-navu' (divine tongue). His food is Karikkadi (black wash) but the meal of the Nambootiri or Kshatriya is 'amrutet' (eating of ambrosia or divine nectar) and so on.[6] The avarna social groups like the Pulayas and Parayas were compelled to use a still humiliating language when communicating to their supperiors.[7]

Administration of justice was also highly discriminatory, devoid of any sense of justice or fairplay. A Brahmin always guided the proceedings of authorities in this respect.[8] All punishments were graded according to caste or sub-caste.[9] Even if a Brahmin committed a series of heinous crimes, he could

not be given any more punishment than banishment from the country. The rulers were quite helpless. Although the King had no power to punish the Nambootiri, the latter had the power to punish the ruler. The punishment meted out to the last Perumal, Ramavarma Kulasekhara, testifies to this.[10] In such a situation suppression of the vital interest and denial of the legitimate rights of the avarnas became the order of the day. They were not only prevented from educating themselves and from enjoying the concomitant social benefits, but were also politically isolated and economically deprived.[11]

In Keralam, temples were the major institutions through which untouchability was applied in real life. In this sense, every caste and sub-caste was allowed entry up to particular points or areas within or outside the precincts of temples. These social groups were not permitted to deviate even an iota from the rules regarding temples and temple worship.[12] As the depressed sections of people were prevented from worshipping god in the traditional temples, they were forced to adopt their own methods of worship and even conceive god in their own ways. No wonder, they resorted to demon worship.[13] "Madan" "he who is like a cow" was the major demon worshipped by non-caste Hindus in Keralam. Madan had had assumed numerous forms such as "Chula Madan" or "Furnace Madan", "Kumily Madan" or "Bubble Madan", "Poruthu Madan" or "Fighting devil" and "Neecha Madan" or "Wicked devil", "Mallan" or "the giant", "Kutti Sathan" or "little sathab", and "Muchandi Muppan" or "the old man of the three roads". Kali was a female demon god of the depressed Hindus. Offerings to the devils were also of a very special type. Toddy, arrack and animal sacrifices were the major offerings to the devils worshipped by the avarnas.

Moreover, it was considered to be the bounden duty of the ruler to be the guardian of the then existing social structure, including the laws which propped up such an arrangement arrayed against the avarnas. Indeed, the thunder of the state was applied heavily on anyone daring to violate the existing laws, customs, etc.

The advent of proselytising religions such as Christianity and Islam, particularly the former brought much relief to the suffering millions who were treated with contempt and cruelty and considered much worse than domestic

animals by the caste-Hindus. As these religions promised 'liberty, equality and fraternity', non-caste Hindus embraced them en masse in order to escape the rigours of Hinduism. No wonder, the strength of the Hindus began to decline considerably which is testified to by Table 1

TABLE 1

Growth of Population from 1816 to 1881

Year	Total Population	Hindu & Tribal Religions		Christians		Muslims	
		Actual Number	% of Total Population	Actual Number	% of Total Population	Actual Number	% of Total Popultion
1816-1820	906587	752371	83.0	112158	12.4	42058	4.6
1875	2311379	1702149	73.6	469023	20.3	140056	6.1
1881	2401158	1755610	73.1	498542	20.8	146909	6.1

*Source: N. Kunjan Pillai, Census of India 1931, Vol.XXVIII, Travancore, Part I, Report, (Trivandrum, 1932), p.331.

As is shown in the Table cited above, in 1816-1820, the Hindus constituted 83.0 per cent of population. Christians and Musilms constituted 12.4 per cent and 4.6 per cent respectively. But, in 1881 the percentage of Hindus declined to 73.1, whereas Christian population increased to 20.8 and that of Muslims to 6.1. In the succeeding years also, the trend continued to be the same. It was in such a situation that Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928) emerged on the social horizon of Keralam. As he was deeply affected by and aware of the social realities, the simplest and the easiest way to liberate the mass of the Hindus was to elevate them in their religious life. Since the temple was the institutional reflection of the disabilities of non-caste Hindus, his struggle to liberate them started with the temples and the rituals connected with it. Thus, ignoring all prescription and descriptions regarding the Hindu temples, Narayana Guru founded a new temple at Aruvippuram, a few kms. south of Thiruvananthapuram in February 1888. "At the midnight of the Sivarathri day (of February 1888) he took his bath, dived into

the river Neyyar and appeared with a stone having the likeness of a Sivalinga (Phallus of Siva), stood in meditation for three hours and installed it on a rock selected as the pedestal for it in the presence of hundred of people assembled there".[14]

Professor. Sadasivan contiues to observe : "By this single act, Sree Narayana Guru abrogated the exclusive authority of the Brahmins, abolished their monopoly over all gods and religious institutions preserved and protected by the ruthless state power and established the right of every Indian irrespective of the station of his birth, caste or creed not only to worship God but raise religious institutions, defying with spiritual force and moral prowess the supersititious fears propagated by the Brahminic sacred books and drastic punishments held out in the Brahminic laws".[15]

Since the consecration of the temple at Aruvippuram and the proclamation of the Guru's ultimate objective as the creation of an egalitarian society devoid of distinction of any kind in the place of a rigidly structured, compartmentalised and highly discriminatory one to the non-caste Hindus opened a new chapter in the social history of Keralam No wonder many trace the origin of all progressive movements in the state to the foundation of Aruvippuram temple and all that it symbolises.[16]

During the last quarter of the 19th century the non-caste Hindus in Travancore had been seething with discontents as a result of the denial of even a mediocum of human rights by the Hindu orthodoxy, solidly supported by the ruling regime. The Aruvippuram installation had now magnified their disappointment several times, so as to stir them up for enduring struggles to redress their grievances. This was exactly the reason why Dr. P. Palpu (1863 - 19) who himself was one of the worst victims of social discrimination in Keralam,[17] co-operated with the Malayali Memorialists of 1891, seeking redress of their grievances regarding appointment to public services . Apart from this, as part of his efforts to emancipate the Ezhava community, Palpu himself had taken the troubles to submit two memorials to the Travancore authorities in 1895 and 1896 respectively to seek redress of their grievance regarding representation in the Travancore civil service and admission into government schools.[18] In spite of his earnest efforts, the authorities continued with their policy of discrimination.

It was in such a socio-political situation that Dr. Palpu had the occasion to meet Swami Vivekananda at Bangalore where the latter had been working. He was advised to seek the services of a spiritual leader belonging to his own community for the success of his struggle.[19] Thus, Palpu visited Travancore and came into contact with Sree Narayana Guru whose fame had by now reached almost all the Malayalam-speaking area.

Kumaran Asan whom Palpu had helped at Bangalore for his higher studies, had now returned to the Guru after pursuing higher studies at Bangalore, Madras and Calcutta and "had entered the public sphere as a radical thinker, brilliant orator and a literary genius".[20] Convergence of these historic personalities who had themselves assumed the mission of emancipating the deprived sections, particularly the Ezhavas, augured well for the disadvantaged sections of Malayalees. The immediate outcome of their association was the formation of the first and foremost social organisation of Keralam, namely, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (Society for the propagation of the Law of Sree Narayana) (SNDP),[21] registered on May 15, 1903 as a joint stock company under the Indian Companies Act of 1882.

Although the original objective of the S N D P was "promoting and encouraging the religious and secular education and industrious habits among the Ezhava community". The Yogam is not an exclusively Ezhava organisation, but a secular association, the membership of which is open to all irrespective of caste or relgion.[22] Anybody believing in the Dharma preached by Sree Narayana Guru and paying Rs.5/- is eligible to become a member. Its territorial organisation extends, mainly over the entire State of Keralam, embracing within its fold 13,67,000 members who belong to 4258 branches controlled by 77 taulk Unions.[23]

The central organisation of the S N D P consists of a Board of Directors and an Executive Council. The Board of Directors consisting of not more than 200 members elected by the Taluk Unions for a period of three years, including the President, Vice President, General Secretary and the Devaswom Secretary, one-third of them retiring every year. The Council consists of 15 members, including the officials. While the Board of Directors is responsible for the administration of the entire organisation, the Executive Council looks after its day-today affairs.[24]

Since inception under its first General Secretary, Kumaran Asan, the Yogam had become multifaceted in its objectives. Apart from raising man intellectually and spiritually to the highest level, the objectives of the Yogam included eradication of evil superstitions and obnoxious customs and practices which were eating into the vitals of particularly the Ezhava community, elimination of illiteracy from the masses and their enlightenment through education, entry of backward classes into all government institutions and representation to all communities in the legislature in proportion to their population, removal of untouchability and the annihilation of caste.[25]

In its efforts to transform the traditional society in the Keralam, the Yogam has been equipped with and guided by the teachings of Narayana Guru, some of which are:

* One caste, one religion, one God for man.
* Ask not, think not, say not caste.
* Let any be the religion, enough, if man has made him good.
* Liquor is poison, drink not, give not and make not it.
* Whatever one observes for one's happiness should necessarily lead to the happiness of others.
* Whatever the diversity in religion, attire and language of mankind, since they belong to the same species, there is no harm in inter-caste marriage, dining.
* Imbibe strength through organisation and seek freedom through education.
* The temple of the highest sanctity is the lyceum.
* It is better to face defeat by standing firmly with righteousness than to nurture victory by supporting unrighteousness.
* The man who knows the art of amity should strive for the prosperity of his neighbourhood.[26]

The people of Keralam in general and the Ezhavas in particular had been following several uncultured and expensive social customs and practices, such as **Thalikattu** , **Thirandukuli** and **Pulikudi**.[27] **Thalikettu** was a ceremony performed for girls before their marriage. It was a sort of mock marriage in which all girls in a family below 12 years of age were seated in a ceremoniously decorated place and a single boy or a group of boys brought to the place in a procession, put the sacred thread or chain around the girls' necks as in a real marriage. Elaborate preparations involving huge expenditure had to go into this cermony and the family had to arrange feasts for four days continuously. At the end of the festivities the mock bridegrooms would surrender their ceremonial robes and depart with the fees prescribed.

Thirandukuli or the ceremonial bath was conducted for girls on reaching puberty. This was in the nature of proclamation that a girl had attained the age of marriage. This also involved expensive feasts and other ceremonies.

Pulikudi was the function to be performed in the seventh month of pregnancy. The husband was to give the wife a drink in which seven different ingreuients of sour tastes had been mixed. As in the case of the other functions, an elaborate feast was a traditional necessity in this case also.

The practise of these customs had been eating at the vitals of the community. Even if the masses desired to discard them, they were unable to stop them for fear of headmen.[28] A survey of contemporary society in Keralam inculding the activities of the Guru and the SNDP reveals that the Yogam, inspired and guided by the Guru, had been very cautious in its efforts in abolishing these customs. The Guru had exploited the potentialities of the Yogam as best vehicle for his reforms. Through the SNDP, he asked people to assemble together in each locality and to listen to what he had to say in this regard. The first of such meetings was held at Paravur in the present Kollam district on October 16 1905, two years after the formation of the Yogam.[29] As testified to by later events, this meeting proved to be one of the landmarks in the history of Keralam, that the Guru decreed the eradication of the above-mentioned customs and introduced new methods for conducting the marriage ceremoney.

As commanded by the Guru, in the new system of marriage there would be a neat and beautifully decorated wedding platform in the middle of which a sacrificial lamp and the ceremonial articles of *Ashtamangalyam* would be kept. While the rites were conducted by the priests belonging to the community and the auspicious musical instruments played, the bride and the bride-groom would go round the sacrificial lamp and *Ashtamangalyam* thrice and garland each other. At the end of the marriage rites, the priest would recite aloud simple and beautiful verses in Malayalam, clearly bringing out the significance of those rites.[30]

Meanwhile, the SNDP had appointed full- time preachers to popularise the teachings of the Guru. In a message sent to the Yogam he specified four topics on which they were to speak to the masses and facilitate their spiritual and material progress, namely, religion, ethics and morality, education and industry.[31]

1. Religion

a. Reject superstitious rituals with animal sacrifices and the like meant to proptiate the evil spirits.

b. Speak about the superiority of worship done in the best form and also about the <u>*saguna*</u> aspects of Hindu philosophy.

c. Persuade people to build temples and *mutts* wherever they demand them. But, do not run down the other religions in malice or in a way likely to cause other religionists to agitate.

2. Ethics and Morality

a. Speak about truth, cleanliness, fear of unrighteousness, theisms and unity.

b. Give lectures stressing the necessity of rejecting, as far as possible, the meaningless and harmful customs, adopting cultured and refined ones suitable to times. Guide people along these lines.

3. Education

a. Explain the benefits of education and the loss caused by its lack and encourage people to see to it with pride that not a single member of either sex in the Ezhava community is without primary education.

b. Induce people to start industrial establishments wherever required, and to study and popularise industries scientifically.

Apart from these general instructions, the Guru had prescribed two special rules to be observed by the speakers:

i. No speaker should ever tell people anything about which he is in doubt. He should get all important doubt cleared by the Guru through the Secretary of the SNDP.

ii. Speeches should never be such as to hurt the feelings of the so-called 'higher' castes. People should be made interested in the uplift of the 'lower' classes.

As a result of the vigorous campaign organised by the SNDP to popularise the teachings of Guru, Keralam began to register phenomenal socio-economic developments. Apart from the reform of the institution of marriage and eradication of other social evils, as is mentioned earlier, the SNDP had given much importance to the spread of education among the masses. As aginst the deliberate denial of education to the toiling masses by the orthodoxy, ably supported by the ruling regime, the Yogam strove hard to make education popular. The Guru's call to seek enlightenment through education and his call to establish educational institutions of various types thoroughly revolutionalised the educational sector in Keralam, as is testified to by later events. Although, the rulers of Travancore and Cochin had entered the field of education since 1817, in addition to the efforts of the European missionaries particularly after 1850s, the masses generally remained illiterate and uneducated. A welcome change in the field was, however, visible since the founding of the symbolic Siva idol by Narayana Guru in 1888 at Aruvippuram. Indeed, the momentum of the spread of education began to increase, since the SNDP also entered the field. This is testified to by the following Tables:

Table I

Growth of Educational institutions During 1886 - 1890*

Year	Colleges	English Schools		Vernacular Schools		Total
		Govt.	Private	Govt.	Private	
1886	1	22	4	226	645	898
1887	1	23	3	223	675	928
1888	1	23	3	227	690	944
1889	1	23	51	227	.752	1054
1890	1	23	60	227	2007	2318

* Source :- Ullor S. Parameswara Aiyer, **Progress of Travancore Under H.H Sreemoolam Tirunal** (Thiruvanathapuram, 1998), p.590.

It may be noted that in 1886 there were only 898 schools in Travancore. 1887 and 1888 registered only marginal increase in the number of schools. But since 1888, the state began to witness unprecedented progress in the field of education. This is testified to by the increase in the number of schools in the state. As for instance, in the place of 1054 schools in 1889 there were 2318 schools in 1890. A noteworthy feature of the growth of educational institutions in Travancore was that the number of government schools remained, more or less, the same during 1886-1890.i.e: 226-227, but the role of the private sector increased tremendously during the same period, i.e; from 898 to 2318. Similar was the development in the strength of students attending schools during the same period (Table II). One of the contributing factors in this respect was definitely the impact of Narayana Guru and his activities.

Table II

Increase in the Strength of Students During 1886 - 1890*

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	% of population	% of school-going population
1886	39428	8675	48103	2.0	13.3
1887	42035	8839	50874	2.1	14.1.
1888	40802	9009	49811	2.0	13.8
1889	46277	10192	56469	2.3	- 15.7
1890	81153	16704	97857	4.0	27.0

* Source:- Ulloor S.Parameswara Aiyar, op. cit: p.590.

A survey of the education development of the state reveals that the greatest beneficiaries of the spread of education in the region were the higher-to deprived social groups generally and in particular, the Ezhavas. In a period of ten years from 1894 to 1904 Travancore, the nerve-centre of the activities of Narayana Guru and the S N D P registered appreciable progress in the rate

Table III

Statement showing Educational Progress of Travancore During 1894-1904*

Classes	1894-95	1903-04	Percentage of increase
Tamil Brahmins	4799	6114	27.4
Malayala Brahmins	1000	890	11.0
Kshatriyas	278	328	17.9
Malayali Sudras	39500	60413	52.9
Ezhavas	10885	23496	115.9
Shanars	5466	6732	23.2
Parayas	1560	2200	41.0
Pulayas	1565	1538	-1.7
Vedas	37	27	-27.0
Kuravas	197	141	-28.4
Mohamadans	6357	8862	39.2
Syrian Christians	15703	26476	68.6
Roman Chatholics	15705	22400	42.6

* Source :- V. Nagam Aiyer, The Travancore State Manual (Trivandrum, 1906) Vol 1 p.430

As revealed from Table III, the State registered appreciable progress in education during the period from 1894 to 1904 and the Ezhavas registered enviable progress in the rate of literacy, i.e; 115.9 per cent. In later periods also the community witnessed more or less, the same progress. The credit for such a

development definitely goes to the SNDP. The educational activities of the SNDP assumed much strength and momentum after Independence that it was compelled to create a separate agency for looking after its educational interests. Thus, as resolved by the Board of Directors of the SNDP on August 3, 1952 the Sree Narayana Trusts (S N Trusts) was formed on August 18, 1952 with the following objectives:

* To manage the S N College and hostels attached to them
* To establish a technical educational institution at Kollam and a college at Sivagiri
* To establish and administer other institutions aimed at the promotion of the religious, educational, social, cultural, economic and health interests of the people ; and
* To take over the managment of the similar Trusts.[32]

A survey of the educational activities of the S N D P and the S N Trusts reveals that much progress has been achieved by these organisations. Presently the S N Trusts itself manages14 Colleges, one polytechnic, two I T Cs, 28 Schools, 2 hostels, in addition to other institutions, like hospital, employing 2476 persons, including teachers and others, with a student strength of 35199, besides 22 schools and four colleges managed by the SNDP.[33]

Apart from its educational activites, the SNDP has been actively fighting for the annihilation of caste and that the best and the easiest way to accomplish the goal was to abolish untouchability. T.K.Madhaven (1885-1930), the Father of the Temple Entry Movement in Travancore, who once held the posts of Assistant Secretary and Organising Secretary of the Yogam, played the leading role in this respect. He was one of the two leaders of the Civic Rights Movement in Travancore (1918-1922) organised for the redressal of the grievances of the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus regarding representation in the Revenue-Devaswam Department. Abolition of untouchability was also incorporated as one of the two objectives of the Movement. It may be noted in this respect that non-caste Hindus in particular were denied appointment in the Department on the ground of untouchability. Since the authorities had accepted the demands of the

agitationists, they were also made eligible for appointment in the Department[34] Emboldened by the success of Civic Rights Movement, Madhavan continued his struggle for the abolition of untouchability from all spheres of public life. Lack of freedom of movement around Hindu temples was one of the other disabilities imposed on the avarnas of the state. This discrimination at its severest form was practised at the Siva temple, Vaikkam. By this time T.K.Madhavan had been struggling both inside as well as outside the Travancore legislature for the abolition of the disabilities of the Ezhavas, in particular, regarding temple-entry and temple-worship. The authorities continued with their policy of discrimination without any change, even after repeated requests, from the aggrieved sections. This attitude of the authorities compelled Madhavan to seek outside help for the purpose. Thus, since 1921 he sought and got the blessings of Mahatma Ghandhi and since 1923 of the Indian National Congress for the realisation of his social objectives. His efforts in this direction culminated in the Vaikkam Sathyagraha of 1924-1925. organised for getting the rights of the non-caste Hindus to move freely through the roads round the Siva temple there. Though the Sathyagraha was not a complete success, it succeeded in evoking the conscience of all concerned against the practice of untouchability.[34]

Since the conclusion of the Vaikkam Satyagraha, Madhavan struggled to realise the dream of the non-caste Hindus for temple entry. Founding a Temple Entry League for giving form and shape to his stuggle at the very place of the sathyagraha , Madhavan organised a series of public meetings for moulding public opinion in this regard. At the meeting organised at Ochira in 1929, Madhavan delivered a detailed and lengthly speech covering all aspects of the Movement as well as the desires of the deprived sections. The speech was later brought out as a publication entitled **"Kshethraprevesanam"(Temple Entry)** by K.R.Narayanan, one of the former General Secretaries of the Yogam.[35] It can be considered as the **Bible** of the Temple Entry Movement in the state. In his struggles Madhavan was liberally assisted by the progressive-minded members of the Nair community, like Mannath Padmanabhan, the founder-leader of the Nair Service Society (N S S). Although Madhavan had passed away in 1930, his efforts for temple entry fructified on November 12, 1936, when the Travancore ruler issued the TravancoreTemple Entry Proclamation, theoretically permitting entry of all Hindus into the temples maintained by public autorities in the state.[36]

Although highly politicised, the Co-operative Movement in the State has been contributing significantly for the socio-economic development of Keralam. A survey of its history reveals that it was that T.K.Madhavan, who was insturmental to the formation of the first Co-Operative Society in the State at Kumarakam.[37] Inspired by Narayana Guru and the S N D P, Madhavan Organised a movement for imposing prohibition in Travancore in 1920s, which severely affected the revenue of the Travancore Government.[38] Naturally, he came to be known as the Pussy Foot of Travancore. Like Madhavan, a number of prominent leaders of Ezhavas struggled themselves to popularise the movement initiated by the SNDP. Consequently, Travencore witnessed appreciable socio-economic progress.

In the Cochin area of Keralam, social revolutionaries like K.Ayyappan, (b,1889) widely known as Sahodaran Ayyappan, spearheaded the movement of Ezhavas for socio-economic rights. Apart from the annihilation of caste, Ayyappan strove strenuously for the promotion of inter-religious amity, inter-dining, and rationalism.[38] The S N D P in the Cochin area was also in the forefront of popular agitations for the redress of the socio-economic grievances of the deprived sections of the population. The 1946 'Declaration of Rights' issued by the S N D P consisting of the demands of the agricultural and industrial workers testifies to it:

1. Abolition of landlordism
2. Permanency of tenure to peasants and tenants
3. Reduction of taxes and mortgage rates
4. Soft loans to the agriculturists to reduce debts
5. Supply of implements, seeds and manure free of cost to agriculturists
6. Encouragement to co-operative farming; and
7. Guarantee of reasonable price and sufficient marketing facilities to agricultural produces.

The Declaration had also highlighted the demands of the industrial workers:

1. 'Guaranteed of minimum wages sufficient to lead a decent life.
2. The maximum working hours in a week should be fixed at 40
3. Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

4. Guanrantee of employment or unemployment allowance, maternity benefits, sickness and old-age allowance and compensation for accidents.
5. Guarantee of healthy working conditions, a day's leave with wages once in a week and annual vacation.
6. Provision for settlement of labour disputes in favour of the workers,
7. Nationalise transport and big industries; and
8. Government control over and assistance to small-scale industries.[39]

Though not to the same extent, the Malabar region also felt the impact of the movement initiated by the S N D P. Mitavadi C.Krishnan (1866-1938)." an irrepressible and tempestuous force in social front of keralam" and Murkoth Kumaran (b.1874), " a prolific writer with intellectual courage", were two of the important leaders of the movement in the region .[40].

The socio-religious reform movement intiated by Sree Narayana Guru through the intrumentality of the S N D P has brought about appreciable progress in all areas of human thought and action in Keralam. The rapid spread of education, enabling the state to occupy the prime position in literacy in the country, abolition of uncultural, expensive and avoidable social customs and practices, eradication of untouchbility, reform of temple and temple-worship, temple entry and freedom of movement, religious freedom, inter-religious marriages; inter-dining and communal harmony, apart from other socio-economic and political rights are some of the outcome of the activities of the S N D P, motivating the non-caste Hindus as well as caste Hindus to emulate the S N D P and its activities. The formation of the Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam in 1905, the Yogakshema Sabha in 1907 and the Nair Service Society in 1914, as for instance, to initiate similar reforms in the Pulaya, the leading Scheduled Caste in the state, Nambootiri and Nair communities respectively testifies in the impact of the S N D P as the pioneeimg and the most successful social organisation in the Malayalam-speaking area of the country. Social development naturally led to political development as well. Understandably, many trace the origin of all progressive movements in Keralam to the S N D P and its activites, inspired and guided by Sree Narayana

Guru. Indeed , as P.K.Gopalakrishnan observes, the role played by the S N D P in the rennaissance of Keralam is the same played by the Indian National Congress in our national movement.

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THE NAIR SERVICE SOCIETY IN KERALA : GENESIS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

Dr.S.Yamuna Devi

Kerala represents a unique religious picture whereby adherents of the three major world religions live side by side in large numbers. While Hindus represent a definite majority, Christians and Muslims are each a strong minority. (Hindus-57.28%, Christians-19.32% and Muslims-23.33%). Casteism and communalism play a prominent role in the coalition politics of the state, as there is an almost even distribution of the population into four well-organised communities- Nairs, Ezhavas (both Hindu caste groups), Christians and Muslims (both minority religions). All these communities have their own organizations or interest groups- the Nair Service Society, the SNDP Yogam, the Christian Church (of various denominations) and the minority style politics of the Muslim League.

The Nair Community, one of the largest in the Kerala State and forming the lowest stratum of the upper caste Hindus, had for long been the backbone of the erstwhile Princely States of Travancore and Cochin. The Nairs formed the most important section of the Malabar population and held a position in caste next to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Traditionally they were warriors who formed the militia. The Nairs enjoyed privileges and power in the Brahmin dominated, caste-based feudal Society from the 15th to the 18th centuries. The joint family system and the matrilineal system of inheritance, two outstanding characteristics of the community, contributed to their sound economic base during the period. However, this dominant position started to decline with the centralization of administration by King Marthanda Varma in the 18th century and reached its climax by the end of the 19th century, after the establishment of the British suzeranity in this region. The modernisation of the administration, transport and communication, introduction of a cash economy, spread of English education etc. transformed and re-structured the feudal society, ultimately leading to a revival or re-awakening, especially among the younger generation of all communities at the beginning of the 20th Century. Efforts of some educated, progressive-minded Nair youth, under the leadership of Sri.Mannath Padmanabhan to form an organisation, (emulating the Church and the SNDP Yogam), with a

view to modernise the community and make it regain its integrity, self-respect and social and national usefulness, finally gave birth to the Nair Service Society on 31 October, 1914.

Beginning as a social, educational, cultural and charitable organisation, the Nair Service society (like other Caste centered social reform organisations in Kerala), metamorphosized into an interest group by mid-1930's. The Nair Regulation of 1925 which legislated away the outdated joint family system, matrilineal system etc was a major achievement of N.S.S. during the early stage. Being the interest group of a prominent community, which was part of the establishment in the erst-while states of Travancore and Cochin and ahead of other communities in the sphere of higher education, the N.S.S. played significant role in the society and politics of the State before and after Independence. The present paper focuses on the origin, evolution, and major activities of N.S.S. in the socio-economic sphere of Kerala.

The Caste-based feudal set up of traditional Kerala and the Nair Dominance

The traditional Kerala Society was immobile, highly hierarchical, non-competitive and vertical. In it, caste determined the socio-economic and political status of an individual or group. It was more of an ascribed status-determined by birth-rather than achieved status. The entire social structure was based on feudalism. Followers of each of the three religions were divided into numerous groups and sub-groups. Divisions were more numerous among the Hindus who were divided and sub-divided into hundreds of mutually exclusive groups. With over 500 divisions and sub-divisions and conceptions of pollution which extended beyond untouchability to unapproachability, Kerala was described by Swami Vivekananda as a 'mad house of caste'. The native Hindu population of Kerala did not emulate from the Aryans the typical structure of Hindu ritual ranking- the 'Chathurvarnya'. Of the four basic varnas or occupational categories, Kshatriyas were very few and Vaisyas non-existent, in Kerala. Nairs took the place of Kshatriyas here although the Nambudhri Brahmins regarded them as Sudras. The Muslims and Syrian Christians have, to some extent provided a trading and

business community. According to E.M.S. Nambudiripad, "the traditional warriors of Kerala in historical times were the Nairs, who, by occupation combined the functions of Kshatriyas with those of the Vaisyas and Sudras. They were simultaneously the backbone of the military system, stratum of the cultivating population and did service to the Brahmin and ruling families[7]".

As stated by M.S.A. Rao, the system introduced in Kerala could be divided into five- the Nambudiris (Malayala Brahmins) at the top, followed by Kshatriyas (the ruling class), Antharala- jathis(intermediary caste) like Elayath, Pisharody, Nambiar, Varier etc. who were the temple servants, Nairs (who constituted a considerable bulk of the population and considered as 'the eye and hand of the Ruling Class') and finally the polluting caste at the lowest level[8]. In the social hierarchy, the 'untouchables' or 'non-caste Hindus' (like Ezhavas, Aryans, Velans, Kammalars, Kanisons, Mukkuvar, Cherumals, Pulayans, Pariahs etc.) constituted the base and the Brahmins the apex[9].

The word **Nair** is derived from the **Nayaka**, which means leader of the people. Some scholars consider it to be more correct to derive the term Nairs from Nagas (Snakes or Snakes worshipping Nagas or Seythians). The Nair belong to the Dravidian race, but contains a large admixture of Aryan blood. According to Sardar K.M. Panicker, the Nairs were not a caste, but a race. As they do not come under the four-fold caste division, they could be treated as a community, if not a race. Not necessarily all Nairs share the surname **Nayar** (Nair) along with their names. Some have Kurup, Kaimal, Panicker etc.

The diversity within the Nair community has attracted the attention of sociologists and anthropologists. According to the Census of 1901, there were 116 sub groups among the Nairs. Fawcett gives the names of 21 divisions. The 'Jathinirnaya' classified Nairs into 18 sub-divisions, based on their social connections, occupations, customs etc. According to the 1931 census report, the number of sub groups have been reduced to five - *Ellakkar, 'KiriyathilNair, Swaroopakkar, Padamangalakkar* (temple servants) and *'Tamilpadakkar.* The first three divisions *Illom* (Nairs having Brahmin connections), *Swaroopam* (Nairs connected to ruling families) and Kiriyam (pure nairs having no connections to Brahmins and Kshatriyas at least in the early periods) were considered superior groups.

Before the establishment of British rule, the present region of Kerala was divided into a system of districts of *Nads* headed by chieftians or *Naduvazhias* under the King which were in turn divided into villages or *desams* (under the *Desavzhis*). Each *desam* had separate caste organisations like the Nambudiri 'Village', the Nair *thara* (in the northern regions) or *Kara* (in the southern region) and the *Cheri* of the low castes. The King's rights on the land were limited to *Rajabhogam* (Share of lands revenue to King). The Kings used to donate cultivable lands to the Brahmins and also for temples. The non-cultivating *Jammis* (Nambudiri Brahmins) transferred the cultivation right on rent basis as *Kanam* to the intermediary Nairs and placed them in the upper stratum. They were militarised and given the authority to supervise the lower castes. In return for the land rights the Nairs gave military services to the landlord and to the Chieftain of the district. A portion of the produce from the land was also to be given.

The Nair estates were held through martilineal Kinship and control. A portion of the land was retained for cultivation by the serfs of the household and the rest was least for Ezhavas. The Ezhavas in turn gave these rights to their serfs. This involved four or five levels of non-cultivating tenants, each extracting a portion of the produce from the same land kept whole[12].

The martilineal or *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance based on the 'matrilocal' joint family called the *tharawad* were descended from a common female ancestor but the management of the *tharawad* was vested in the eldest male member, the *Karanavar* or managing head. The property and assets of the joint family were held in common by all members and none could claim his share of the property. So long as the *Karanavar* was selfless, efficient and generous and the nephews obedient, responsible and loyal, the Nair, *tharawads* were centres of glory and prosperity.

The upper class Nairs were allied by a system of common law marriage called *Sambandham* with the Nambudiris. But the children born in that alliance were not entitled to any share of their father's property. The *tharawad* had to bear the burden of looking after these children. The Nair community performed several luxurious customary ceremonies in connection with birth, marriage, pregnancy, death etc. They used to spend so much money in celebrating the festivals of temples.

Robin Jeffrey is of opinion that by 1847, Nair numerical dominance of the Civil Service was overwhelming, probably a third of Nair joint families had a relative in government in some capacity. Of course they had to face competition from non-Malayali Hindus.

In short in the pre-capitalist social setup of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the Nairs were in "comfort" and enjoyed a dominant or privileged position.

Destruction of the old order and the decline of Nair dominance

With the establishment of British Suzeranity over Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the pre-capitalist society was undermined under the impact of cash economy. The British Suzeranity proved to be a catalytic agent for the transformation of Travancore from a traditional Society to a mordern one. As a result, the economic equality which was considered a caste taboo in the past changed radically. Buying or selling, or holding of land by non-caste Hindus brought economic equality among the different communities. The matrilineal system and the impartible *tharawad* which were once a guarantee against fragmentation of property, had proved a big shackle for the individual who was struggling for emancipation from social bondage. However, the ending of the warrior role, the abolition of agrestic slavery, the growth of a money economy and the impact of western education combined to undermine the relevance of Nair traditions[13]. The young men of the tharawad were condemned to idleness, the management of the estates were more difficult, the expense of customary practises more burdensome, and the competition of rival communities, notably the Syrian Christians and Ezhavas, more Challenging[14]. By the end of the 19th century, the Nairs had lost their pre-eminence based on the ascriptive rights of feudalism and caste. The Community on the whole had been declining ecnomically, politically and socially.

Social Reform Movements and New Social Order

By the latter half of the 19th century, a new 'middle class' based on education income and occupation emerged in all communities. This new generation of Nairs educated and restless like thier counterparts in other communities, wanted thier community-members to understand the meaning of socio-economic changes

and modernize, rather than drifting along in the rut. They tried to awaken thier fellow Nairs to the reality of - (1) thier exploitation by the Brahmins, (2) their decadent system of inheritance and succession and very out of date but expensive social customs, (3) their inadequate share of government service and (4) the need for social and economic renaissance of the community[15].

Towards the beginning of the 20th century, the influence of Brahmasamaj, AryaSamaj, Sri Rama Krishna Mission and the Theosophical Society were gradually being felt in Kerala Society. Chattampi Swamigal inspired the Nair Community to make necessary social reforms. During this period some educated Nair youth appeared in the public life of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar like C.Krishan Pillai, C.V. Raman Pillai, Kavalam Neelakanta Pillai, V.R. Sanakara Menon etc. These far sighted leaders took initiative in rousing the Nairs from the state of torpor. In 1886 an organisation called **Malayali Sabha**, was started by some students of the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum with the assistance of two Scottish Professors of the College, Principal John Ross and Prof. Harvey. Its members discussed subjects like female education, marriage customs, literature and social reform. The aims of the 'Malayali Sabha' included encouraging deserving students, establishing educational institutions and promoting social welfare[16]. The Sabha also started a newspaper called **Malayali** in early 1886. The 'Malayali Sabha' spread its activities to Central and North Travancore. It had 25 Schools and 14 branch associations. Although the Sabha had a few non-Nair members, its social aims were particularly Nair oriented. It is said that organised social work in Travancore started with the Malayali Sabha. Gradually, the Sabha assumed the nature of a Political organisation, when it started to criticize the corrupt policies of the foreign Dewans (mostly Tamil Brahmins) and of the officers appointed by them. This finally paved the way for the submission of the famous Malayali Memorial (to the Maharaja), the first organised political movement in Travancore in which the people of Travancore asserted their right to have due share in the government of their State.

However, immediately after the submission of Malayali Memorial, the Malayali Sabha withered and died, as the Government adopted the policy of revenge towards its leaders.

Keraleeya Nair Samajam

C. Krishna Pillai, a dedicated worker of the community and Teacher, realised the importance of reviving the old *Karayogams* or *Koottams* instead of starting new organisations for the rejuvenation of the Nair Community. Under his direction several **Karayogams** and **Nair Samajams** were organised by leaders at different places of Travancore. On 13 June, 1903 C. Krishna Pillai (CKP) organised **Travancore Nair Samajam at Trivandrum**, the first step towards a Travancore-wide and later kerala-**wide association**. **By** this time, a parallel organisation called **Keraleeya Samajam** was created by C.V. Raman Pillai (CVR), P. Ayyappan Pillai etc. (who had political ambitions and official aims) which included all Malayalis and not Nairs alone. In 1905, both the organisations joined together to form the **Keraleeya Nair Samajam**. It combined CKP's moffusil branches with CVR's influence in the capital.

The 'Keraleeya Nair Samajam'could create wide-spread awareness among the Nairs of their declining influence in the socio-economic, political and educational fields. Its annual conferences provided a very good forum for the communication of ideas between the leaders and the masses. Though the Samajam was registered as a joint stock company in 1912, personal revalries and difference of opinion among leaders retarted its activities[17].

The Nair Service Society

Finally, on 31 October, 1914, fourteen Nair youth, under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan (a young advocate from Changanachary, central Travancore, who registered a Nair Karayogam at Perunnai, Changanachary in 1912, which later expanded into the **Changanachary Taluk Nair Samajam** in 1913), gave birth to the **Nair Samudadya Bhrithya Jana Sangham**, on the pattern of the ideals of the Servants of Indian Society[18]. It was renamed as **Nair Service Society** on 11 July 1915 and registered under Travancore Company Regulation on 30 June, 1925. Realising that lack of full time workers had been the reason for failure of the earlier organisations, Mannath Padmanabhan resigned his job, and dedicated his life to the service of the community, as a full time worker of N.S.S. By 1916, N.S.S. stepped into the shoes of both Keraleeya Nair Samajamand its breakaway group, **Samastha Kerala Nair Maha Samajam** and became the sole representative of the Nair community. K.Kelappan who

later became a famous Sarvodya leader, was its first president and Mannathu Padmanabhan (popularly known as Mannam), the first General Secretary. Mannathu padmanabhan continued in that post up to 1945, when he became its president. Mannam formally resigned from the post in May 1947 to join the State Congress and the Freedom Movement[19].

The condition of the Nair community was more or less the same in all the three regions-the princely states of Travancore and Cochin and the Malabar region of the Madras Province. However, the Nairs of travancore took initiative in organising reform movements and associations in the beginning of the twentieth century. The Nair leaders of Cochin came next and the leaders of the Malabar region, the last. As a result of the endeavours made by Mannam and M.N. Nair, the **Cochin Nair Maha Samajam** was registered by the Nair leaders of Cochin in 1920, and an almost inactive North **Kerala Nair Samajam** in 1930's. Later, after the Travancore-Cochin integration in 1949, 'Cochin Nair Samajam' merged with N.S.S. in 1951. The N.S.S. gradually extended its activities to the Malabar region and succeeded in obtaining the whole hearted support of the community in that region also.

Structure And Organisation of N.S.S.

The N.S.S. has a solid structure and organizational cohesion which exhibits administrative efficiency and democratic character. As a result, no substantial amendments have been made in the basic structure of its constitution even after 86 years of working.

The Head Quarters of N.S.S. is located at Perunna, Changanachary, in the Kottayam district of Kerala. At the top of the organisation Pyramid is an Executive council consisting of the President, General Secretary, Treasurer and two other members elected by the Board of Directors from among themselves. The 27 member-Board of Directors comes next, which is elected by the General Body having a fixed strength of 300 and elected by the electoral members of Karayogams, under the supervisions of Taluk Unions. The grass-root level units of N.S.S. are called Karayogams and the strength of N.S.S. lies in its Karayogams roots. When the N.S.S. was organised in 1914 there was only one Karayogam. By the time of Independence its number rose to 1,582 and at present there are about 4,480 Karayogams.

In between the local units and the general body there are N.S.S. Taluk Unions composed of representatives of Karayogams for control and co-ordination of the activities of Karayogams. At present there are 57 N.S.S. Taluk Unions all over Kerala.

In the beginning, the N.S.S. had no assets. But in 1947 it had a budget of eight lakh rupees. In 1957, the budget shot up to 46 lakh and again to two crores rupees in 1966-67. Its budget was 25 crores in 1998-99[20].

Major Objectives Of N.S.S.

The specific interests of caste-based organisations are vital for its growth and survival. Most of the objectives were conceived by the N.S.S. at its early stage itself. Significantly, the declared objectives avoid harted to other communities and further it proclaims its commitment for nation building and the development of a welfare society. A select list of its objectives are given below[21].

(a) To establisn *Karayogams* in all *Karas.*

(b) To train, encourage and help members for the welfare for the community.

(c) To establish and maintain schools, occupation institutions, industrial concerns, orphanages, hostels, hospitals, ashrams etc.

(d) To remove differences prevailing among Nairs from place to place in their social customs and make them uniform.

(e) To participate in the efforts of other communities including the depressed classes for the betterment of their lot.

Various departments function unser N.S.S. like the department of General Administration, Organisation, Education (Schools and Colleges), Agriculture, Health Services, Engineering, Audit and Accounts, Planning and Development etc[22].

The organising department is entrusted with the task of establishing Karayogams and registering them with the N.S.S. It is its duty to see that there is understanding and co-operation among the basic units and the central organisation.

The Education department is the first department created by N.S.S., considering the priority given to the educational sphere by the founding fathers. Its activities in this fields began with the establishment of schools and the inauguration of colleges was in the second stage. It has about 65 High schools, 32 primary Schools, 19 unaided schools and 4 teachers training centres. 15 N.S.S. Arts and Science colleges function under the various universities in kerala. It has 7 colleges under the university of Kerala, two under Mahatma Gandhi University, four under the Kannur University. Three teachers training college and five professional/technical colleges/Institutions also function under the N.S.S. management.

The Agricultural department looks after the affairs of the real estate owned by N.S.S. at different places of Kerala. Its plantation include rubber, coconut, arecanut, cardamom and coffee of several acres.

Six hospitals function at different places of kerala, under the health services departments of N.S.S. The service Society has an official media or 'mouth piece' called the 'service' (M) which communicates the official opinions and views of N.S.S. on political social and cultural issues to both its friends and also to the ruling elities. Started as a monthly, the service is now being published as a fort-nightly since 1993.

Role of N.S.S. in Social reform movements

Though upliftment of the Nair community has been the chief aim of N.S.S. the Society workers were concerned from the beginning, with the friendship and co-operation of other communities and also the upliftment of the depressed commuities. They believed that the Kerala society could be strengthened only through the unification and modernisation of the Hindu community as a whole and this could be realised only through the redication of untouchability that was prevailing among the Hindus. The N.S.S. leader obtained an opportunity to work together with the Ezhavas when the emergence of the demand of the avarnas for temple entry arose.

The agitation of temple entry was conducted, it is said, not so much by the avernas as by their Savarna synpathisers[23]. Already the impact of the western

ideas and education contributed much in changing the mind of the younger generation of savarnas. The works of social reformers and activities of the state Congress, the SNDP Yogam and the N.S.S. also made significant contribution towards this direction. As a result, the 'depressed classes' were made conscious of thier various disabilities so much so that they began to aspire for equal status with the higher classes.

The movement for temple entry was started in Travancore before it was thought of in other parts of the country In 1922 when Mannam was elected to the Sri Mulam Assembly, he raised this issue of temple entry to all Hindus. (The issue has been raised three times earlier by others with no effect). Though the Nair population in general was against invoking permission to harijans in temples, the N.S.S. bodies passed and sent resolutions to government demanding the same[24].

The Kakinada session of the INC in 1923 constituted an Anti-untouchability committee for the uplift of the depressed classes. This gave impetus to the reform movements in Travancore and Cochin. Vaikkom Satyagraha (1924) was the first attempt in this direction which was a joined endeavour of the KPCC, SNDP Yogam and the N.S.S. It was for obtaining permission for avarna Hindus to walk along the public roads surrounding the famous temple at Vaikkom. As a result of the Satyagraha, the roads on three sides, except on the eastern side was thrown open. Following this, the Guruvayur Satyagraha was conducted but the same parties with no immediate results. (It was for achieving the right to worship for avarna Hindus in the Guruvayur temple).

In both these Satyagrahas, the N.S.S. leaders played active and leading role. Their major task consisted in changing the mind of the orthodox, upper caste Hindus including Nairs in favour of permitting temple entry to the lower castes, In the words of Mannath Padmanabhan. "It was not an easy task to stand in support publicly for such a Satyagraha for which the government and the whole *savarnas* including majority of Nairs were against"[25]. It is noteworthy that the N.S.S. general Secretary led the Savarna Jatha (accompanied by other N.S.S. leaders and prominent workers) from Vaikkom to Trivandrum to elicit public support on the way, for the cause of the eradication of untouchability and temple entry for avarnas. As a member of the temple entry committee, Mannam undertook

vigorous campaign and toured all over Kerala along with T.K. Madhavan, (the organising Secretary of the SNDP Yogam), to collect funds to form committees and enlist volunteers who should be ready to die for the cause of temple entry[26]. Finally the temple entry proclamation was made in Travancore in 1936, followed by Malabar in 1938 and Cochin in 1948.

The psychological background had been so much effectively prepared that no savarna in Malayalam speaking areas raised a voice of protest against the government's resolution. Soon after, the temples all over India were opened to all Hindu Castes in a steady process.

Approach of N.S.S. Towards Major Pubiic Policies

As stated earlier, in the post-independence period, the Nair Service Society emerged as a powerful interest group and exerted tremendous influence over the successive state governments to shape public policies in its own favour. This was especially during the first two decades after independence. Since 1967, the caste-based organisations or community-interest groups ceased to have the relevance which they once had in state politics. However, it was a period when caste-based political parties like the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League were emerging and making gains in the political bargain. In the case of N.S.S., it lost its founder leader (who controlled its destiny since the beginning), on 25 February, 1970. In the given circumstances, the power of N.S.S. to influence public policies like land reforms, educational reforms and reservation policy, declined considerably during this period. As a result, the next generation of N.S.S. leadership, represented by Kalathil, Kidangoor and Makappuzha gave birth to a political off shoot, the National Democratic party (NDP) in 1973.

However, the political party was a failure due to several reasons[27]. Of late, the N.S.S. leaders realised the wisdom of its great founder who always resisted the idea of forming a political wing of N.S.S. He believed that the N.S.S. could protect the interests of the community more effectively by being group, without creating a political party. The present 'equi-distance policy' followed by N.S.S. towards political parties is indicative of its frustration with both the coalition fronts.

The Land Reforms and N.S.S.

The series of land reforms in the state had begun since 1957 which had altered the traditional structure of the Kerala society. Obviously, the Nair community being a major beneficiary of the feudal system was affected by this engineering task. The first unified legislation in respect of land reforms in the state was the Agrarian Relations Act (1960), mainly a handy work of the Communist Government, (1957-59). This Act provided for tenancy reforms and fixation of ceiling which badly affected the Nair community which agitated under N.S.S.[28]. This formed an important reason for the liberation struggle and the fall of the ministry.

The Agrarian Reforms Act introduced by the Congress-PSP Government of 1960 exempted land belonging to religious charitable or educational institutions of 'public nature' and public trusts[29]. It was actually a concession extended to major communities who controlled most of these institutions. It was really an achievement of N.S.S. as a major community interest group. Later a more comprehensive land reforms Act passsed in 1963 and amended in 1967 (by the E.M.S. - led United Front Government) was introduced by the Achutha Menon government on 1 January, 1970. This act which sought to abolish landlordship once for all contained provisions of intermediary rights over tenented lands, conferment of proprietary rights on culivating tenants, option to hutment dwellers to purchase the Kudikidappu and apartment area, imposition and enforcement of cealing on land holdings and take over and distribution of the surplus land[30]. Though the N.S.S. together with the Church strongly opposed the Bill which is hailed as the 'Magna Carta' of the peasants, the government did not care for its objectives.

The Educational Reforms and N.S.S.

Being a big educational agency, managing a large number of schools and colleges, the N.S.S. had been very much affected by the several reforms introduced by the Government in the sphere of education. Though the N.S.S. welcomed the Kerala Education Act, 1958 (introduced by the Communist Ministry) in the beginning, later on, it turned against the bill. Following this, the Kerala

University Act 1969 and 1974 were passed by the state Government with the aim of increasing the control of Government over the University and private colleges in the State. The N.S.S. like other private managements expressed strong protest against the 1969 Bill and joined them in filing a case in the High Court and later submitting an appeal in the Supreme Court declared one more sub section, (in addition to the two sub sections invalidated by the High Court), as violation of Article 30(1) of the Constitution involving minority rights[31].

The success of the private managements is clear in the decision by the Select Committee of the legislature the clause for permanent takeover of private colleges, incorporation for a provision for special representation for managements in the Senate, and the provision for the government to clarify the circumstances under which a private college might be temporarily taken over.

The N.S.S. together with other private management opposed the 1974 Act which sought to reduce their representation in the University bodies and to confer on the Government more powers to control the administration of private colleges. The Bill was referred by the President of India to the Supreme Court which withheld certain controversial clauses. The Bill was finally passed on 1, April 1974.

Thus it can be seen that the N.S.S. could represent the interests of the Nair community and raise its voice for the protection of the interests of the community whenever the government passed a harmful legislation.

The Reservation Policy and N.S.S.

The Nair Service Society has been fighting for economic reservation against communal reservation since the Administrative Reforms Committee appointed by the first Communist Ministry recommended for it in 1958. According to the N.S.S., the benefits of Article 16(4) of the Constitution must be given to all sections of backward classes, irrespective of caste and religion.

The argument of N.S.S. got further strength on the basis of the several interpretations and judgements of the different High Courts as well as that of the

Supreme Court. The N.S.S. couldn't accept many provisions of the Backward classes reservation commission (Nettoor Commission) Report of 1970 which extended communal reservation for promotion also. (It was appointed by the CPI(M) led coalition ministry of 1967-69 and was rejected by the CPI-led P.K.Vasudevan Nair government in 1978 due to protest from all sections of population.

The Supreme Court permitted implementation of the report of the Mandal Commission, approved by the Central Government on 16, November, 1992, with some amendments. The court in its judgement in the 'Mandal Case' had directed the Union and all states in February 1993 to specify norms for exclusion of the 'creamy layer'. "whether on the basis of income, extent of holding or otherwise".

In Kerala, where political parties supported by religious and caste groups have been integral parts of successive ruling coalitions, constitutional provision to decide backwardness has been interpreted and sometimes distorted by mainly two forces in order to prevent successive state governments from making an objective assessment of the real nature of backwardness in Kerala Society.

These forces were the result of the reservation system that had existed in the state. One of them had reflected the anxiety of the members of the forward communities who feel the pinch of the system of communal reservation implemented in the state before Independence. The other force draws strength from the backward communities especially the new "upper crust" of the socially, economically and educationally forward among them, who contend that the introduction of the creamy layer norm will result in the phasing out of the reservation benefits thay have been enjoying for years, and which they actually wanted to be increased.

One group represented by the Nair Service Society argues that economic debility should be the criterion to decide backwardness and demands 15 percent reservation to the economically weak among the forward communities and the other group led by the SNDP Yogam dominated by the Ezhava community argues that communal reservation should continue without any change what so ever. The latter argues that reservation is neither an employment programme nor an economic programme to remove poverty. It says that reservation is meant for a

community as a whole, which does not have adequate representation in government and that there is no reason why the economic status of individuals should be taken into account. Instead it wants importance given to the general social backwardness of a community[33].

These two arguments divided the state into opposing vote banks, and made it difficult for the state government to comply with the Supreme court directive to specify norms for the exclusion of the creamy layer among the backward communities. After dragging their feet for more than three years, the political parties in Kerala-with the exception of the CPI(M) showed unusual unity in passing a legislation called 'The Kerala State Backward classes ' (Reservation of Appointments of Posts in the services under the state) Act, 1955, (popularly known as the Reservation Protection Act). It declared (with controversial evidence) that there was no socially advanced section and as such the system of reservation that had existed in the state for years should continue without any change.

The N.S.S. filed a case in the Supreme court claiming that the Act violated the rights guaranteed by Article 14 and 16 of the constitution and hence unconsitutional. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court on 13 December 1999 gave the following judgement, by striking down the 1995 Act:- *"when government unreasonably refuse to eliminate creamy layer from the backward classes or when governments include more and more castes in the list of backward classes without adequate data and inquiry, a stage will be reached soon when the whole system of reservation will become farcial and a negation of the constitutional provisions relating to reservation[34]"*.

The court passed severe strictures on the state for the long delay in complying with its directive to appoint a commission to identify creamy layer. The court also said that until such time, the state had to follow the guidelines of the K.J. Joseph Committee appointed at the Court's directive in order to identify the creamy layer and recommend norms for its exclusion from reservation benefits in state government services. With the December 13 Court decision, the creamy layer norm became applicable to government appointments in Kerala for the first time[35].

Cancelling of the Reservation Protection Act, 1995 by the Supreme court is considered as a great achievement of N.S.S. which from the very beginning has been fighting for economic reservation.

Conclusion

Although there is no parallel organisation in the Nair community, the credibility of the N.S.S. to command respect from the entire members of the community is doubtful. No purposeful attempt has been noticed on the part of the leadership to attract the youth of the community. Proper care is not being taken to increase the number of membership. Systematic programmes to keep the members alive and active are also found lacking. The N.S.S. leadership has not properly oriented its community members about the scope of private sector and the need for developing an industrious character in an increasingly globalised economy. However, they have become comparatively more industrious than before in the context of stiff competition from other communities and the changed socio-economic conditions.

On the positive side it can be added that integration of the sub-divisions of the community, which is a hectic task has been more or less realised. The community has been relieved from many of its traditional out of date customory practises. Economic assistance is provided for deserving students and also for house construction, self employment etc for the poorer sections. N.S.S. medical missions also perform effective service to the community.

Though there are several limitations, internal as well as external, to the effective functioning of N.S.S., this 86 year old organisation can be hopeful about its future. As a social reform organisation and a big educational agency with an annual assest of about 30 crore rupees, it can play a significant role in Kerala society. Being the interest group of a major community, it will also have a definite say in public policies. The reality that no rival organisation has emerged to compete with the N.S.S. from the community is itself a positive factor highlighting its legitimate strength.

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18. The founding members took the oath to the effect that they would devote the rest of their lives to the service of the Nair community, without causing offence to the other communities.

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MODERNISATION OF CASTE GROUPS AND THE ROLE OF CASTE ASSOCIATIONS: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THE NAIR COMMUNITY IN KERALA

Dr. N.Jose Chandar

Any study of caste groups and associations today is faced with a complex of forces and phenomena like modernity and tradition, progress and retrogress, invoking challenges of transformation. It involves the analysis of historical, economic and social factors leading to changes in the value systems, as well as of the changing process. The term modernisation has been used to comprehend all the changes that occur as societies move from a more traditional, small scale, rural character such as the current Western orders[1]. Theories of how modernization takes place have been linear in their assumption that the process follows a uniform recognizable direction. Accordingly, modernizing societies become increasingly replaced by industry, work becomes increasingly specialized and professional. Alongside, there is a process of de-ritualisation, politicization and secularization taking place in society.

Researchers on Indian society are baffled by the unique character of the caste system prevailing in the Indian sub-continent, legitimized by religion and diversified by societal and ecological factors. Caste system is very ancient in Indian society, particularly in the North, but it is supposed to have come to Kerala only with the settlement of the Aryans in the 8th to 11th centuries. Till about the 8th century, the division of society based on the Aryan model of *Chaturvarna* was unknown to Kerala. The immigrant Brahmins hobnobbed with the ruling chieftains of the time, acquired lands from them for building temples and conferred the status of Kshatriyas on them (later known as Rajas) in an attempt to introduce the *Chaturvarna* in the region. They encouraged the women of these families to accept Brahmin men as their husbands, thus elevating the rulers to a higher social status. The traditional caste structure as it existed in Kerala, probably by the end of 11th century, was stratified as follows:

(1) The Nambudiries (Malayali Brahmins) were at the apex. They formed a small part of the population, yet they enjoyed the highest position in the hierarchy.

(2) Immigrant Brahmin castes, Emranthiris and Pattars from Tulu and Tamil Nadu, were placed a little below the Namboodiries.

(3) The Kshatriyas (The ruling families) also formed a small percentage of the population .

(4) A group of intermediary castes (Antarala Jatis) constituted by Ambalavasis (temple servants) were placed below the Kshatriyas but above the Nairs.

(5) The Nairs who were treated as Sudras and constituted the bulk of the caste population were the last among the caste Hindus.

(6) The polluting castes or the non-castes themselves were of different hierarchical categories, each practising untouchablility between themselves.

There are several conjectural theories regarding the origin of Nairs. But recent researches have shown that the Nairs were not known as a distinct community before 11th century and that they might have emerged out of the protecting class or security guards of the rulers and of the Brahmins[2]. The Brahmin supremacy and economic power facilitated marital relations *(Sambandham)* between Brahmin men and Nair women, and this contributed to the elevation of the Nairs in social status. The village lands were owned by the royal lineage, by the temples under the Brahmin management or Namboodiri families, the later being the most prevalent. The landlord *(Jenmi)* could sell land only with the consent of the chieftains and to the families of the appropriate caste only. The Namboodiri lands were held intact by tradition, which permitted only the eldest son to marry within the caste, the younger ones entering *Sambandhams* with Nair women. Namboodiries kept part of the land for cultivation by their serfs and leased out the rest to the Nair matrilineal households. The Nair estates were also held intact by the matrilineal kinship and joint family systems. They also leased out a major part of their lands to the sub tenants. Thus their physical proximity to Namboodiries, land ownership and social leadership in the village gave the Nairs a status to that of Namboodiries.

With the turn of the 20th century, the joint family and the related land holding system broke up under the impact of social change and legislative measures. The joint family system had already proved economically inefficient

and domestically troublesome, and as such many inferior castes, which were, practicing joint family system had shifted to elementary family units. There was no workable legal provision for partitioning family properties, and so illegal transfers of land were taking place. The inflation in the wake of the First World War and the depression of 1929 brought about the pauperization of peasants as also of many landlord families[3]. The latter were compelled to sell off their lands or mortgage them in order to clear past debts and meet current needs.

The demand for splitting up joint family properties led to some government measures in the three regions-Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. In Travancore, the Nair Act of 1912 provided for the bequeathment of one half of the self aquired property to one's own sons, and the second Nair Act of 1925 sanctioned that partition of ***tharavads***, the shares being calculated on a per capita basis. With the passage of the Ezhava Act of 1926, the Ezhavas the bulk of the whom were matrilineal in Travancore became patrilineal in inheritance. In Cochin the Nair Act of 1920 legalized the customary marriage and entitled the wife and children to maintenance. This affected the Namboodiries too as it placed on them the legal obligation to maintain their wives and children under *Sambandham*. Again the Cochin Nair Act of 1937-38 entitled every member of the family to his share of the tharavad property and declared wife and children as entitled to the properties of the deceased. The Madras Marriage Act (1896), the Madras Marumakkathayam Act (1933) and the Madras Namboodiri Act (1933) changed the structure of the family orrganization and law of inheritance in Malabar. They made the husbands legally responsible for maintaining their wives and children, and consequently, there was decrease in the number of exogenous marriages. The legal measures rendered land transactions easier and enabled the economically advanced, non-land owning communities to acquire land. The biggest losers in the development were the Nairs and gainers were the Christians. The economic and social changes paved the way for the decline of the caste-based inequalities in society. Further, the introduction of English education and the activities of Christian missionaries to promote the education of the depressed sections creatd a new consciousness which gave the next blow to the caste oriented feudal structure.

The social disabilities that smoothered the *avarna* groups and blocked their linear progression persuaded them to look toward lateral entry into upper castes by joining the Christian and Muslim religious groups who were treated

honourably by the upper castes. However, this trend did not last long as they found that the caste prejudices had followed them to these communities as well, making the socially higher look toward them as "unclean". Although Nairs had many conditions favourable to them as an upper caste, they had to suffer from humilitating behaviour on the part of the Brahmins. Some reform movements emerged, by the end of the 19th century, which sought to improve matters among the higher castes. The most significant among them were the Hindu Sanathana Sabha and Bharatiya Misra Mandalam which conveyed the message of Hindusim as Sanathana Dharma[4]. Indeed more fundamental were the contributions of Sri Chattamai Swamikal, a Nair by caste and Sri Narayana Guru, an Ezhava, who criticised the caste system and the notion of superiority of the higher castes.

It was in these circumstances that the Nairs, who had already got representation in the civil services and felt offended at the royal policy of importing Tamil and Mahratta Brahmins to the higher posts, had submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja. This memorandum submitted on 11th January 1891 came to be called the Malayali Memorial, signed by prominent Nairs, Christians, Ezhavas and even Namboodiries. The memorandum demanded proportional representation as well as preferential treatment for the natives of Travancore, irrespective of caste, class or creed. Within one year, the Nairs got most of what they wanted, and this induced the Ezhavas to submit the Ezhava Memorial in 1896 and other non-caste groups to submit their own memorials one after the other to redress their grievances and concede equal rights with caste Hindus[5].

The first two decades of the 20th century witnessed the formation of several caste based organisations meant for promoting the interests of each community. The first in this line was the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam started in 1903 under the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan, the famous Malayalam poet. Nairs followed suit by forming the Travancore Nair Samajam in 1903 and the Kerala Nair Samajam in 1905. These were later superseded by the Nair Service Society formed in 1914 which became a mighty large organisation representing the Nair community and wielding political clout[6]. Mannath Padmanabhan, the founder leader of the Nair Service Society, came to be so powerful as to shape the character of Kerala politics for about a quarter of a century until his death. Other non-caste communities also formed their respective organizations during this period.

These organizations got themselves enmeshed in several communalistic and secularistic activities of localistic and nationlistic implications. Temple entry, abolition of untouchability and civil disobedience were movements of this period which were actively supported and participated in by members of these organizations, hastening the process of de-ritualisation and politicization as essential stage in modernization. Gandhiji's leadership of the Congress combined social reforms like the abolition of untouchability in the Hindu community and access of non-caste Hindus to all temples so as to unite all Hindus into the larger fold. The Vaikom Satyagraha(1924) launched by the Nair leaders of the Congress together with leaders belonging to Ezhava and other groups to assert the right of the lower caste men to pass through roads close to the Vaikom temple was an epoch-making socio-religious development. Had it not been for Gandhiji's intervention, it would have developed into a secular movement for human rights.

Within a few years after the Vaikom Satyagraha, was launched the Guruvayoor Satyagraha (1932) which began as a movement led by Nairs for the entry of lower caste to the temple and turned into a campaign for their own caste. Here also, Gandhiji intervened and depoliticised the issue by making it more of a matter of religious reform than of social reform. However, these developments had set the background for the Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) of Sri Chitra Tirunal of Travancore which was described by Gandhiji as a "miracle of modern times and a smriti which is the people's character of spiritual emancipation"[7].

Congressmen preferred to look at caste inequality as a matter of differential hygiene[8]. Allied to this idea that persons identified with an occupation could gain respectability by changing the nomenclature. So Tiyas called themselves Vaidyars, Kammalars (artisans) accepted the title of Viswakarmas, and prominent Nairs like K. Kelappan Nair and Mannath Padmanabhan Nair dropped the caste name to identify themselves with non-caste men. Some low caste groups tried to imitate the upper caste men in physical appearance, like cherumas sporting *Kudumis* in the style of Nairs. Programmes to promote the use of Khadi and encourage interdining with members of lower castes launched during this period were associated with the idea of equality. Large numbers of Nairs were involved in the Congress activities and related action programmes, which promoted them to mobilize reforms within the community and in relation to others.

The Nair dominance in public services as well as in the representative legislative bodies set up by the Maharaja of Travancore had provoked the Ezhava, Christian and Muslim communities to demand a higher representation for them in these bodies. They formed the Joint Political Congress and decided to boycott the elections to the legislature in 1933. The boycott was a failure as Christian, Muslim and Ezhava members were elected to the Legislative Assembly. But the agitation was a success as the government conceded in a few years the principle of communal representation in the legislature and took steps to implement it. The Joint Political Congress converted itself into the Travancore State Congress in 1938 to work for responsible government, and leaders of the Nair Service Society remained outside the mainstream until they joined the popular movement on the eve of Independence[9].

Since independance the role of caste groups became more politicized as they tended to develop as constituencies for national and secular parties. The Indian National Congress was supposed to be Christian dominated as the backing for the party came largely from the Christian belts in Travancore. The Communist Party of India gained support largely from the Ezhavas in Malaber and Nairs in Travancore, and the division of the party in 1964 tended to divide the electorate on similar communal lines. The caste associations tended to focus on government and bureaucracy for influencing public policy and legislative measures with a view to ensuring egalitarian distributive justice[10]. Thus they became powerful pressure groups with organizational apparatus for exerting pressure on government and electoral strength to decide the destinies of political parties.

The attitude of the political parties in turn was one of encouraging the caste and communal groups invoking *quid pro quo* arrangements. There was a trend of radicalization of politics in the 1950s and 60s in Kerala and this manifested the trends of secularization too. However, the seventies and eighties witnessed the assertion of communal groups to forge their own political parties and to bargain with the secular parties to come to power in coalitional form[11].It was in this period that the NSS had launched the National Democratic Party and the SNDP the Socialist Republican Party. Both the parties disappeared almost within a decade and the respective caste associations returned to the old style of bargaining with the secular parties.

Democratic politics and de-ritualisation have tended to convert the caste associations into politically motivated secular organizatios to ensure justice for their communities. This change has done away with the purity-bound social status, but strives to create a status difference bound to economic growth and cultural progress and leads to a categorisation of "forward" and "dalit" communities. The very term "caste' has come to be socially rejected in Kerala today and the term "community" is being used to denote a group whether caste-based or not. Efforts are also afoot to bring several dalit communities together under the national or regional federations with a view to strengthening themselves n their negotiations of bargaining with the government. Thus caste has taken the character of a power-group functioning within a competitive democratic politics[12]. It survives as a kinship based cultural community and operates in a different, newly emergent system of social stratification[13].

The Caste associations in Kerala like the NSS and SNDP have undertaken a wide range of economic, cultural and other secular programmes, which apparently benefit all communities and people. These programmes are not merely measures for serving the community members, but are viewed as channels for increasing the social and political power of the respective communities. The NSS, for example, manages a vast network of schools, colleges, polytechnics, hospitals, hotels, estates and co-operative societies, the annual budget estimate for which amounts to a total of Rs.34,51,00,000[14].

The number of Institutions run by the NSS are given below[15].

Institution	Numbers
Arts and Science Colleges	15
Training Colleges	3
Technical Colleges	5
Unaided Colleges	2
Secondary Schools	65
Teacher Training Schools	4

Lower Primary (LP) & Upper Primary (UP) Schools	32
Unaided Schools	19
Hospitals	7
Estates	8
Working Women's Hostels	8

A caste association of such dimensions and receiving financial aid from the government for many of its programmes cannot afford to be narrowly communal.

The caste associations have been instrumental in educating their men about breaking down the occupational structures and modernising themselves for ensuring status in the changing circumstances. The Nairs had come to occupy more than fifty per cent of government jobs in the pre-independence days, but this had made them economically weaker compared to Christians who were agriculturists or had turned to commerce. The NSS leader Mannath Padmanabhan spared no means to exhort them on the importance of agricultural and industrial work as means of going higher on the social ladder[16]. Wealth or income has become the fundamental basis of the new stratificatory system. Ritual roles and castes, if any, maintained today consist of functions performed on payment basis.

The emergence of a new middle class in the traditionally backward polluting sections and the popular acceptance of the new criterion for determining social status seems to have reversed the role of the caste hierarchy. The so called upper castes are today opposed to the statutory provision assuring special treatment for the backward caste groups particularly the "creamy layer" among them. The NSS has been spearheading a movement against the caste-based reservation of government jobs, and now they are demanding reservation of fifteen per cent of government positions for the economically backward people in the forward communities, and in this movement they get the tacit support of other forward or "no reservation" communities[17].

In the context of the emerging social democracy and changing values of the stratificatory system, the relevance of caste associations may be questioned. But the basic human tendency to group formation, whether communal or secular, cannot be challenged. In the process of politicization and secularisation they are undergoing today, the caste associations are moulding the traditional rigidities and moving toward an interactive, if not integrationist, phase. Moreover, with greater financial commitment and autonomy in the areas of competitive activities, they seem to emerge as new socio-economic formations competing for the control of economic, political and cultural resources of society. And in this sense, one may even look at them as constituents of a developing civil society in our state system.

Notes:

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3. Namboodiripad, EMS, Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tommorrow (Culcutta, 1967), p. 140
4. Viswanathan Achary.
5. Somarajan, C.N., and Sivadasan.S., The Civic Rights Movement in Travancore (1918-1922), **Review of Social Sciences** (Trivandrum), Vol. I, No.3, July 1995, p.84
6. Nair, A. Balakrishnan, The Government and Politics of Kerala, (Trivandrum, 1994), p. 12.
7. Cited in Ramakrishnan Nair, Social Structure and Political Development in Kerala, (Trivandrum, 1976), p. 61.
8. Dilip M Menon, Caste,Nationalism and Communism in South Asia, Foundation Books (New Delhi), p.81.
9. Hareendrana Kurup, NSS Charithram (Mal.) Vol-II (Changanacherry, 1944), pp. 42-44.

10. For an account of pressure group activity on legislation, see N.Jose Chander, Legislative Process in Kerala, (Trivandrum, 1918).

11. N. Jose Chander, Politics of Communalisation and Secularization in Kerala, **Kerala Sociologist,** Vol. XXII, No.L, June 1994, pp. 13-14.

12. D.L. Sheth, Caste and Secularization in India, in Peter Ronald De Souza (ed), Contemporary India: Transitions, Sage (New Delhi, 2000), p.243.

13. Ibid, p. 244.

14. Budget 2000-2001, Nair Service Society, Changanacherry.

15. Hareendranatha Kurup, n(9), pp. 1135-42.

16. Hareendranatha Kurup, Mannath Padmanabhan (Biography) (Mal.) Kottayam, 1997), p. 195.

17. Hareendranatha Kurup, n(9), p. 1038.

THE POLICY OF RESERVATION AND BACKWARD COMMUNITIES IN KERALA

Dr. N. Vikrman Achary

Reservation for Backward Communities has remained as a major problem of debate and dispute through out the history of modern Kerala. The discussion and deliberations on it have now taken a new dimension with the Supreme Court's discovery of "Creamy layer" principle. Hence an attempt is made to highlight the problems associated with Reservation in Kerala.

The Policy of reservation was quite firmly established in India during the decades of the British rule. But such a policy was designed more to redress communal inequalities in the representation in public services rather than a social engineering device to redress the rooted socio-economic inequalities of the society[1]. In the Government of India Act, 1909 certain privileges were provided to the Muslims, but there were no representation for the backward classes[2]. As a result of long struggles made by caste organisations and benevolent reformers all over the country, there came a turn in Indian mind in regard to the question of Backward Classes and Social Justice.

It is important to note that the day the Constitution of India came into force, on January 26, 1950, the All India Backward Classes Federation also came into existence. By the time of the constitution of the First Backward Classes Commission, many Backward Class Organisations had been formed. As Majumdar presented in 1954, in 15 States 88 organisations of Backward Classes were working and out of these organisations, 74 represented individual communities and 14 belonged to Backward Classes in general on local or a state basis[3]. Thus the organised move for reservation and other concessions on the part of the Backward Communities was visible during the last days of attaining independence. But it received force and strength only after independence.

The Constitution of India prescribed protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other Backward Communitites (OBC) either specifically or by way of insisting on their general

rights as citizens with the object of promoting their educational and economic interests and of removing the social disabilities which the Backward Classes were subjected to. One of the most important safeguards was that the Constitution permitted the State to make reservation for the Backward Classes in case of inadequate representation and requiring the State to consider the claims of the SC's and ST's in the making of appointments to public services[4]. The various provisions in the Constitution (Articles 15(4), 16(4), 46 and 340 etc) relating to reservation, therefore, acknowledged that reservation is an integral part of the principle of equality where inequalities existed[5]. The insertion of clause (4) to Article 15 was not so much based on legal necessity as on political expediency[6]. It reads, nothing in this Article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the SCs and STs.

The term backward classes described the totality of groups entitled to preferential treatment on the basis of their Backwardness. But the so called OBC referred specifically to those backward groups other than SCs and STs. As to the meaning of Backward Classes, Dr. B.R. Ambedkhar, the first Union Law minister, made it clear that what are called Backward Classes are nothing else but a collection of certain castes. Mere poverty was not thought to be enough for the claim of benefit of backwardness. In the view of Jawaharlal Nehru, backwardness was the cumulative effect of divergent factors-economic, social and educational. Nehruvian vision was to avoid caste consciousness. In his view, caste could be taken into consideration in unavoidable circumstances to locate really the Backward Classes in historical perspectives. This view was clearly stated in the conclusion of his famous work, "Discovery of India". An examination of the question in the background of Indian social conditions shows that the expression Backward Classes used in the Constitution referred only to those who were born in particular castes or who belonged to particular races tribes or religious minorities which are backward[7].

For the all round development of the society and educationally Backward Classes a policy of protective discrimination was designed and effected by the National Governement and the Governments of various States in India. But the

OBCs had to wait untill the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in 1991 to enjoy the benefits of protective discrimination policy of the Central Government. But several States like Kerala had already extended such benefits to them from very earlier times.

Reservation for OBCs in Kerala

The State of Kerala, at the time of its formation, was bewildered with many complex social problems. Among them, perhaps, a very serious one was the problem of Backward Communities. At present they consist of more than 73 castes with their sub-divisions and constitute 68 percent of the State population as per the Joseph Committee Report of May, 1997. The Ezhavas, Muslims, Latincatholics, Nadar/Viswakarmas, Dheevaras, Converted Christians etc. are the major segments among the OBCs in Kerala. The study of the traditional status of the OBCs illustrated the cruelty of casteism and their struggle unto death to bring about a new state of things. Even before independence, in Travancore, several struggles were made to highlight the cause of the Backward Communities. The most important of these was the Abstention Movement (1935) led by the Backward Castes and the Minorities against the dominance of the Forward Castes in the Public Services. With the appointment of the Public Service Commission in Travancore in 1935 and the adoption of a system of communal rotation in matters of government appointment, the Backward Communities began to get representation in government services[8]. After the formation of the state, the Govt. of Kerala had appointed several commissions for collecting facts for the purpose of reservation in government services and providing reservation and concessions in educational institutions. The Backward Class Committee under the Chairmanship of V.K. Velayudhan, the Education Commission under K. Kumara Pillai and the Reservation Commission for the Backward Communities under the Chairmanship of Nettur P. Damodharan were the important Commissions appointd by the Government of Kerala in this regard.

In June, 1961, the Backward Class Commission under V.K. Velayudhan came into force. After the study of the problems, the Commission had made the following recommendations in its report: (i) in technical institutions and vocational educational institutions 40 per cent of seats for the OBCs and 10 per cent seats for the SCs and STs are to be reserved, (ii) the same quota of reservations is to

be made applicable to new appointments in Government services and (iii) to organise an expert committee in order to redivide and determine the Backward Communities. The Government accepted the recommendations in principle only. They agreed to 25 percent reservations for the OBC students in the field of education[9]. In july 1964, as per the instruction of the High Court of Kerala, the government appointed a new Backward Class Commission under the chairmanship of G. Kumara Pillai: It submitted its report in December, 1965. It classified the Backward Communities and fixed the annual income limit as Rs.4,200 for reservation of seats in educational institutions. It also recommended for fee concessions and special financial assistance to OBC students. But later when the issue came before the High Court, it proposed for raising the annual income to Rs.6,000 and instructed the Government to make a study of Backward Communities so as to provide educational concessions to them as prescribed in Article 15(4) of the Constitution of India.

The Reservation Commission for the Backward Communities under the chairmanship of Nettur P.Damodharan was appointed according to a decision of the Kerala High Court in 1967. The Nettur Commission Report turned out to be a controversial one. The Commission conducted a sample survey to decide on the population of the Backward Communities. But the OBCs had complained that the estimated population of the Backward Communities in accordance with the Nettur Commission Report was not accurate. To them the Commission had tried to show that the population of the Backward Communities had decreased. Many Backward Communities claimed that they had more population than reported by the Commission. The Akila Kerala Viswakarma Maha Sabha of Viswakarma Community, for instance, made a claim that they had constituted more than 5 percent of the population of Kerala. But the Commission reported that the Viswakarmas' strength of population was only 7.56 lakhs and that it constituted only 3.76 per cent of the population of the state[11].

The Nettur Commission recommended that the reservation must be on the basis of caste for solving the social, educational and economic backwardness of the backward Communities in the State. But at the same time, the Commission added that if a family belonging to the backward community had more than Rs. 8,000 as annual income, it did not deserve the benefit of reservation. This Conclusion was said to be against the Constitutional provisions relating to

Backward Classes. In the Rangachari case (1963), the verdict of the Supreme Court was that the reservation must be on the basis of caste and the backwardness which was mentioned in Article 16 of the Constitution was only the social and educational backwardness and not economic. So the Backward Communities had argued that the reservation based on economic condition would be against the spirit of the constitution. But significantly, some of the weaker and most backward communities like the Dheevaras and viswakarmas took a special stand that economic criterion should not be applied generally for determining backwardness[12]. At the same time, those sections from among the Backward Comunities who had attained socio-economic advancement should be kept out of reservation.

The Nettur Commission recommended for inclusion of not only the Backward Hindus but also the backward sections of all regions in the reservation category. The entire Muslim Community had been accorded backward class status and had become eligible for all benefits including job reservation. The quantum of reservation fixed for each community was on the proportionate basis of their population. Of the total 38 per cent of reservation for the OBC's, the reservation recommended for each community was as follows:[13], Ezhavas-14%, Muslims-12%, Latin Catholics, Anglo-Indians and Converted Christians - 3%, Kammalas(Viswakarmas)-3%, Aryavelan, Ezhavathi, Hindu Nadar, Kedumbi-Kusavan, Yogi, Pandaram-3%, Ambattan, Chakkala Vilakkithal Nair, Veluthedathu Nair-1%, C.S.I.(South Kerala)-1%, and Kotheyar, Yahoothachan, Naidu-1%. The commission also stated that the Backward Communities did not have sufficient representation in the selection posts and therefore suggested that the Backward Communities should be given 50 per cent reservation in the selection posts. This was welcomed by the OBCs.

In November 30, 1970, the Nettur Commission Report was submitted to the Kerala Government. But the Government did not take any action on the report for one year. In protest against this, the Backward Communities launched mass agitations all over the State. In 1972 the State Government published the Commission's report and accepted it. The then Chief Minister, C. Achutha Menon, invited the leaders of political parties for a discussion on the report. But the representatives of the Backward Communities were not invited to attend the meeting. No final decision was arrived at and the Government did not take any drastic step to implement it, but kept it for several years.

The Nettur Commission Report once again became a matter of debate in the Kerala Legislative Assembly in 1977. The then opposition party, the C.P.I.(M), demanded the increase of percentage of reservation to 40 from the proposed 38 per cent in the Nettur Commission Report and also strongly pleaded for the immediate implementation of the Report. The Government found that 8 years have lapsed since the Commission tabled its report in 1970. On ground of such a delay, the Government decided to appoint a new Commission. At the same time, because of pressures from the opposition party and Backward Castes organisations, in 1978, the Government had decided to retain eight sections of the Backward Classes with slight change in the list of reservation without affecting in any way 40 percent of reservation as proposed by the earlier Commission. But no economic condition was laid down. Accordingly percentage of job reservation now being enjoyed by the OBCs in the State is found to be as shown in the table below[14].

TABLE

PRESENT QUANTUM OF RESERVATION

No.	Community	Precentage of Reservation in Class IV	Precentage of Reservation in other Classes
1	Ezhavas	11	14
2	Muslims	10	12
3	Latin Catholics and Anglo Indians	4	4
4	Nadar	1	1
5	Converted Christians (from SC)	2	1
6	Kammalas/Viswakarmas	2	3
7	Dheevaras	2	1
8	Other Backward Sections	8	4
	Total	**40**	**40**

Apart from the job reservations, 25 percent of seat reservation in professional colleges was given to the OBCs on the basis of caste-cum-economic backwardness. The annual income limit for educational reservation benefit was raised to Rs.42,000 on September 28, 1994. There were strong demands from the Backward Classes for raising the income limit for reservation in educational field. Even the Legislative Committee for Welfare of Backward Communities in its report recommended for the timely raising of income limit for education benefits[15]. In consequence of which the annual family income limit for the benefit of educational reservation is now refixed as Rupees 1.5 lakhs. Also the Backward Castes, are given 5 per cent of seat reservation in post-graduate courses on the basis of annual income. In addition, they are provided with special stipends, 5 per cent relaxation in qualifying marks and exemption from tuition fee in post-graduate courses on the basis of income. Similarly in matters of appointment in Government services, the Backward Communities are enjoying the benefit of age relaxation (3 years) compared to the general candidates.

Reservation Controversy

Since the publicaion of the Nettur Commission Report onwards there had been discussions and debates on the issue of reservation. 'What should be the criterion of reservation was the major problem discussed among those who directly and indirectly affected by it. In 1980, the Chief Minister of Kerala, E.K. Nayanar made a reference in the Assembly that the Government proposed to introduce reservation on the basis of economic backwardness rather than caste and educational backwardness. This was welcomed by the forward castes, particularly the Nair Service Society, as it was in tune with its demand for reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. Thereupon, they began to assert for this demand. But before it could achieve any thing in this field, the LDF Govt. of E.K. Nayanar was forced to quit the office. In the years followed, the OBCs strengthened their agitation for reservation benefits purely on the basis of caste backwardness. Thus the situation divided the society into two waring worlds-the forwards and the Backwards.

The appointment of Justice P. Narayana Pillai Commission to study and report on the issue of reservation of seats in educational institutions in Kerala

and the constitution of a legislative Committee for the welfare of Backward Communities were seriously watched by the Forward castes, among the Hindus and had openly pleaded for introducing economic criterion reservation for Backward Communities. Since the reservation benefits are largely hijacked by the affluent sections among the Backward Castes. They also demanded for a quota of job reservation for members of the forward castes who were found economically poorer among them. The major complaint lodged by the OBCs was that they were not adequately represented in political and administrative posts in proportion to their strength of population. It was also cited that they were under represented in various services and offices of the State and Central Governments. Some studies and committee reports have substantiated this argument. The Legislative Committee for the Welfare of the Backward Communities, for example, had reported that the Backward Classes like Muslims, Latin Catholics, Dheevara, Viswakarma and converted Christians did not have even half of their deserving representation in Government services [16]. In the case of Ezhavas also, their representation in Government service as per the quota was not full. The study on the appointments made in 58 Departments discovered that Backward Communities like Muslims had received only 4 to 5 per cent representation in Government services[17]. Further of the 210 posts of secretaries in the State Secretariat, the Backward Communities had only less than half of the representation[18]. Hence the OBCs demanded for special recruitment, increase in quota of reservation and more educational reservation and concessions.

The policy of reservation had definitely helped several backward communities in their upward mobility. But when a member of the so called backward section attains necessary potentiality to compete with the forward section, his successive generations are to be prevented from enjoying reservation further. Reservation is provided to the backward castes by considering them as classes-socially, economically, and educationally backward. As per the interpretation of Constitutional law of India, caste may be considered as a criterion for identifying backwardness. At the same time it is not made a basic criterion for identifying backward classes. Social, educational and economic backwardness constituted the basic bench-marks of backwardness. As such, those who have advanced in social, educational and economic life belonging to all classes and castes are to be denied the benefits of reservation. But so far this was not done.

Consequently, the really deserving ones are deprived of the benfits of reservation. it is a mockery of reservation to see that the sons and daughters of the Ministers and Governors, Ambassadors, Secretaries to Government, Heads of departments and public undertaking are taking advantage of the reservation facility[19].

The pro-reservationists have argued that the superiority of the upper castes and low social ranking of the backward castes are rooted in the Hindu scriptures. They have pointed out how, even today, a poor Brahmin enjoys a higher social status than a rich man belonging to one of the Backward Castes[20]. Although the lower castes are now determined to rise higher, the upward movement is stated to be much too slow[21]. The pro-reservationists, therefore, felt that caste is a relevant criterion in the determination of backwardness.

The above arguments are found to have little currency today. The traditional system of social stratification has undergone a metamorphosis in recent times. A number of factors like universal education, wide-ranging social legislation, land reforms, urbanisation and industrialisation and the consequent diversification of occupational structures are found responsible for this[22]. Today many backward castes are found improved in their socio-economic and political status. In the case of certain backward communities of Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, Uttar pradhesh, etc., they have become potential and powerful players of state politics. It is equally found true that there were several Brahmins below the poverty-line inspite of this being the members of an advavced community[23]. Hence the caste criterion of determining eligible sections for reservation benefits became highly critical and controversial.

'What should be the real basis of reservation' is still found to be a matter of debate in Kerala. The dominant castes managed to enjoy the concessions accorded to the weaker sections because of their political power. Some of the populous and advanced middle castes like the Ezhavas have exerted pressure to retain their privileged status as backward community. In 1957, the Administrative Reforms Committee, appointed by the Government of Kerala, realizing the evils and drawbacks of caste as a basis of backwardness, recommended the economic criterion[24]. This resulted in a prolonged and bitter conflict between the Ezhavas

and Nairs, representing the dominant backward and forward castes respectively. The forward castes like Nairs and Brahmins have complained that the system of reservation in public services, originally meant for poor people of backward communities, has been exploited by the affluent sections of the backward communities. Therefore the system of reservation must be rationalised so as to give special consideration to all people who are economically backward[25]. Thus the forward castes' appeal was for fixing economic criterion for job reservation in public services.

The Backward Communities like Ezhavas, Muslims, Viswakarmas, Nadars, Dheevaras, etc had always stood for reservation on the basis of caste backwardness. They asserted that caste should be the only criterion for reservation because caste as an institution has been sustaining certain groups in positions of power and exploited the weaker sections of the society. it was in the name of caste that several atrocities were done to the backward class people, and exploitation of several kinds are found continuing in the country. As these are found to be the order of the day, in every State in India, caste must be the main criterion for reservation. In fact, the backward communities are found using caste reservations as a synonym for social justice.

Backward minority communities had made some special appeal in favour of caste based reservation. They had made it clear that the number of rich among them was very less and that a major section of them had no economic stability. As such there was no chance for the affluent section to exploit the reservation benefit as far as they were concerned. They also had stressed the need for the continuation of communal reservation till the backward communities attain certain stage of equality with the forward communities besides attainment of social justice. They further stressed that the present quantum of reservation given to them is inadequate to accelerate mobility on the axis of power.

On further enquiry on the problem discussed here, some other factual realities associated with reservation were observed. Though gravitated toward the main stream of life, certain backward communities in Kerala were found compelled, by the considerations of power and economic advantage, to retain their identity as backward. The preferential treatment to the backward classes guaranteed by the Constitution made it necessary for them to insist on being

officially classified as 'backward'[25]. 'Backwardness' that was a social stigma once was now found to be an advantage as there was reservation for the communities[27]. Competition among the communities to be recognised as backward and very backward was also found proliferating. Thus the identities of caste, sub-caste and community which were heading towards a natural death in the proces of modernisation was not only arrested but also preserved and promoted[28]. The revival of the caste and community identify had its inevitable effect on politics. Organized caste groups like Nairs, Ezhavas, Muslims, Christians, Nadars, Dheevaras, etc., had become major players in state politics. This has affected badly the democratic politics of the State. Hence as a solution to this, reservation on the basis of economic backwardness was found proposed and supported by the anti-reservationists and more particularly by the forward castes. The major progressive political party in the State, the CPI(M), also has extended its support to this at least till the Mandal Commission Report was implemented. The BJP was also found on the same line.

Reservation on the basis of economic backwardness is justified on many grounds. In Kerala, there is enough scope for individual mobility today. The unit of social mobility today is not caste or sub-caste or community. Also, no caste or community in the state is exclusively seen as socially, educationally and economically backward. In each community it is found an effective minority which is socially, educationally and economically advanced. Further, the competing demand for reservation in government service cannot be met satisfactorily since the number of educated unemployed among the various communities is found larger compared to the limited posts in government services. Further, the policy of reservation is observed as a natural consequence of the mistakes and wrongs committed by the upper castes in the past. But the youngsters of the upper castes should not be made to suffer for the misdeeds that their forefathers had done in the past[29]. Moreover, it would be difficult for the educated and refined younger generation of all classes of today to see in caste a proper justification for reservation.

The judiciary had, in many cases, hinted about the evil behind fixing caste as the main indicator of backwardnes in the light of changing stratification of society. In Balaji case of 1963, the Supreme Court had brought out that the caste should not be the sole or dominant factor in determining backwardness[30].

The court had also pointed out that the group of citizens under Article 15(4) are classes of citizens and not castes of citizens. The term 'class' showed the division of society according to status, rank and not based on caste. In Chitralekha Case of 1964 also, the Supreme Court had taken a similar stand[31].

The Supreme Court in K.S. Jayasree Case (1976) had accepted the logic of the Kerala High Court that the economic backwardness plays a part in social backwardness and educational backwardness[32]. So poverty or economic standard is cited as a relevant factor. The Court had also held that caste cannot be made sole or dominant test in ascertaining social backwardness although it may not be irrelevant to consider it in ascertaining the same. it was further cited that any state action resulting in reservation must be so tailored as to weed out and exclude all persons who have attained a certain predetermined economic level. Only persons falling below that level must qualify for reservation. This economic level is to be determined on the basis of certain factors like occupation, income, landholding, educational progress, place for residence, earlier generations occupational and educational status, etc. This economic level has , of course, to be varied from time to time in accordance with the changing value of money. In many cases the Judiciary is not supporting the policy of reservation.[33].

When analysed the different sides of the issue, it is felt necessary that those advanced sections in all castes and communities are to be excluded from the backward classes enjoying reservation benefits. The most needy and eligible members of the society belonging to all castes and communities are to be extended with reservation benefit. This is felt to avoid the development of a vested interest, among some sections of society, in the indefinite continuance of the reservation system. A good reservation policy is to be a policy which benefits the needy sections of society without undermining the efficiency and merit, without breaking our solidarity as a nation, and without hampering our march toward progress. Viewed in this respect, the introduction of 'creamy layer' mechanism in reservation scheme, in consequence of the Supreme Court judgement in Mandal Commission (1992), is considered as a bold step towards evolvong a scientific reservation policy.

The Mandal Commission Case and Creamy Layer Issue

The Union Government's decision to implement some recommendations of Mandal Commission Report sparked off spontaneous protests throughout the

country. On the issue of caste-based reservation for the OBCs and the proposed preferential treatment to the poorer sections of the SEBCs, there was also strong division and disagreement among the various castes and communities, political parties, the press and the many State Governments in India. The most terrible scene of the agitation was self-immolation[34]. Some young men and women of forward castes had set themselves ablaze at a few places as they felt that the V.P. Singh's Government's reservation policy meant a future without hope[35]. On the other hand, the major protest of the Backward Classes was that the revised order implementing the Mandal Commission Report divides the SEBCs into backward and most backward and deprives the affluent sections among them of the benefits of reservation.

While the intellectuals had come out against reservations for the backward communities as such, the political parties had generally opposed reservations for some of the dominant among them like Yadavas, Kurmis, Keoris etc. who have gained both economic and political power over the years more than that of the Forward Castes. National parties like the CPI(M), Indian National Congress(I) and B.J.P. had supported the adoption of economic criteria in reservation. It is also found true that there were internal contradictions within all political parties over the issue. All the tensions and problems consequent of the implementation of Mandal Commission Report have come to a standstill with the Supreme Court verdict on Mandal Case.

The Supreme Court's Judgement on November 16, 1992, came as a final verdict on the Constitutional status, scope and content of reservation policy relating to government jobs under Article 16(4). The Supreme Court was acting in **Indira Swahey and Others Vs Union of India and Others (No.930 of 1990)** relating to reservation of 27 percent vacancies in civil post and service under the Government of India in favour of OBCs. The Court has expressed the opinion that job reservation for SEBCs is Constitutionally valid under Article 16(4) and does not compromise the main core of fundamental rights. The Court also reaffirmed the vision of the Constitution that in the Indian context we have to read equality not in an absolute sense but as qualified by Article16(4). The most difficult issue in the reservation case has been the criteria for identifying the SEBSs. The Court has not pronounced any final judgement on it and has indicated only broad guidelines toward the processes (like caste-based occupation), while

leaving to the permanent commissions in the States to formulate locally suitable forms for the purpose[36]. In regard to magnitude of reservation in government services, the Court found that there was no specific quantum suggested by the Constitution and that different State Governments were following different quota system. Hence the Court, keeping in mind the decision in **Balaji Vs State of Mysore Case** (allowing 50 percent of jobs for Backward Communities) and the Mandal Commission recommendation of 27 percent reservation for OBCs ruled that the overall reservation under Article 16(4) should not exceed 50 percent of posts/cadres[37]. The Court also held that the advanced sections of SEBCs - Creamy Layer - should not be given the benefit of reservation and has pointed to the need for evolving a filtering mechanism to weed out the better off among the OBCs from the benefit of protective discrimination[38].

The Supreme Court also struck down the Government Order extending 10 percent job reservation for economically poor section among the forward castes. The Court felt that the caste and class factors in India are inter-related. Hence economic reservation is not practical. The court also observed that job reservation should not exceed 50 percent. Another aspect of the Mandal Commission recommendation perpetuating caste tensions within offices and establishments was the extension of reservation policy in promotions in service. The Court invalidated this. It directed that the benefit of reservation will apply only to appointments and not in promotions in service. The Supreme Court's bar on reservation in promotion applies not only to the OBCs but also to the SCs and STs[39]. However the paramount court has attached two riders to its ruling on the promotion issue[40]. Firstly, it will operate only prospectively and therefore promotions already made on the basis of reservations will not be revoked. Secondly, the existing reservations for promotion in the Central and State services may continue to operate for another five years.

There were mixed reactions to the verdict on Mandal Case. However some positive consequences of this verdict cannot be ignored. Firstly, the most needy and the most poor among the OBCs are made most eligible for reservation benefit. Secondly, the bar on reservation in promotion has minimised the chance for the outbreak of another caste war in future. Finally the court has restricted reservation quota again to 50 per cent and thereby given a shock treatment to political parties which regularly appeal to the caste segments on this issue.

As instructed by the apex court, the Union Government appointed an expert Committee headed by Justice R.N. Prasad, on February 22, 1993, to suggest criteria for the identification and exclusion of the creamy layer among the OBCs. The Committee submitted its report on March 16, 1993. The Expert Committee's recommendations have since been accepted by the Government. The Expert Committee on creamy layer prepared a common list of OBCs for 14 States including Kerala and the lists shall be deemed to have taken effect from September 8, 1993[41]. The Committee had described about 6 categories to whom the rule of exclusion from reservation will apply[42]. It is found that the Committee has considered in general persons having gross annual income of rupees one lakh or above, or possessing wealth above the exemption limit as prescribed in the Wealth Tax Act for a period of three consecutive years, as Creamy Layer secton and hence not eligible for reservation[43]. At the same time the Expert Committee had recomended exclusion of persons working as Artisans, or engaged in hereditary occupations like Potters, Washermen, Barbers etc[44].

Identification of the creamy layer on the basis of this criterion also has been severely criticised by many Backward Castes. It was stated that the introduction of creamy layer in this way would be harmful to the interests of Backward Communities as it normally disqualify the majority of them to the eligibility for reservation. Some truth is found in this statement because comparatively, it would be from economically sound families among Backwards, candidates compete for jabs. If on the basis of creamy layer they are debarred from enjoying reservation, the most advanced backward communities, are not going to enjoy reservation benefits. Hence the Backward Communities, particularly the major ones, have considered the creamy layer as a gun with two barrels, one directed against advanced Backward castes and their enjoyment of reservation benefits.

In fact, the data made available by the Commissions and Committees for identifying backwardness, fixing the quantum of reservation, determining Creamy Layer, etc. were collected not on the basis of any proper study. Both at national and state levels there was much difficulty to understand how far the Backward Communities have advanced compared to the Forward castes.

Creamy Layer Controversy in Kerala

The reservation issue produced much heat and sound in socio-political spheres of Kerala. The decisions taken at national level naturally infuriated the major Backward Communities. The main protest was against the move to introduce economic criterion to determine the most eligible among Backward Classes. The Backward Communities, in Kerala, found no harm in giving 10 per cent reservation to economically backward, forward castes. This was clear from the statements made by some of major Backward Caste organisations in Kerala. The S.N.D.P. Yogam Secretary, K. Gopinathan had openly expressed the support of the Yogam to U.D.F. in 1996 Assembly election on the basis of its manifesto, which promised the contribution of caste based reservation and 10 percent reservation for forward castes on the basis of economic backwardness[45]. The L.D.F. especially the CPI(M) had taken an opposite view regarding reservation issue. Though the CPI and RSP and LDF favoured caste based reservation, the major party, CPI(M) took a different stand. Its decision was in favour of preventing the benefit of reservation to creamy layer sections. This was not acceptable to Backward Communities. Hence they oppposed the LDF in 1996 Assembly election. But the LDF bagged majority of the Assembly seats and was elected to power with the support of Forward Castes also.

Throughout the political history of Kerala it was seen that caste and communal organisations had been playing a political game to their advantage. Hence the political parties also exploited the situation by playing the same game of caste politics. The coalition politics in the State was not merely an activity involved of left and right parties but also castes and communities like the Nairs, Muslims, Ezhavas, Christians, etc. It is understood that the stand taken by the LDF and UDF in regard to the reservation issue was not on the basis of any real fact but to mobilise support of castes and communities. The BJP also had pleaded for barring reservaiton benefits to the creamy layer section.

While the NSS was demanding for reservation on the basis of economic criterion, the SNDP Yogam leadership was convinced that the discontinuation of the present system of reservation would jeopardise the economic interests of the Ezhava upper class and therefore attempted to interpret the move to introduce economic criteria as one directed against all members of the Backward

Communities. But one difficulty cropped up to the great disadvantage of the SNDP Yogam was that Other Backward Communities had developed enough power of understanding to see through the game. Leadership of several Backward Communities had already made clear that they do not want the SNDP Yogam to champion their cause. The Thandar Mahasabha and the Akila Kerala Viswakarma Maha Sabha (AKVMS) had already passed resolutions to this effect[46]. This pointed towards the emergence of a cold war in between the Backward Communities and most Backward Communities.

However, there was no Backward Community found arguing exclusively for economic criterion. The creamy layer concept was protested by the OBCs in general and more particularly by the Ezhavas and Muslims, the two major beneficiaries of reservation. The Backward Communities, with this end in view, had already organized a Samvarana Munnani (Union Backward classes enjoying reservation) to stage united agitations against implementation of creamy layer. The rationality in the introduction of creamy layer was challenged by many on different grounds. Some had argued that the courts have adopted double standards: the better off from the SCs and the STs are not skimmed off into 'Creamy Layer' and 'eligible layer' as in the case of OBCs for the purpose of reservation benefits[47]. They had held that it would be necessary to apply the means test uniformly to SCs and STs and also for OBCs to prevent the well to do from hijacking the benefits of reservation.

The opponents and supporters of creamy layer principle had used maximum pressure tactics to win support for their respective claims. On strong pressure from Backward Classes like Ezhavas, Muslims, Latin Catholics, Dheevaras, Nadars, Viswakarams, etc. the government of Kerala under the Chief Ministership of A.K. Antony informed the Central authorities that there was no creamy layer among backward classes in Kerala and even passed an Act viz. the Kerala State Backward Classes (Reservation of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act 16 to 1995[48]. Barring the CPI(M) the constituents of L.D.F. supported the resolution. But this Act was challenged by the NSS in the Supreme Court. Subsequently the Court rejectd the argument of Kerala Government. As directed by the Court, a high level Committee with Justice K.J. Joseph (Retired) as Chairman was appointed on December 4, 1996 to enquire and report whether creamy layer existed among the Backward Communities in Kerala.

The Joseph Committee received 596 representations/suggestions till January 15, 1997, the last date fixed to receive the same as per its notification. Among the individuals and organisations appeared before the Committee, there were prominent socio-political activists, leaders of various organizations and office bearers. Many of the organizations of the Backward classes had represented before the Committee that there were no advanced sections in any backward classes of citizens in the state who have acquired the capacity to compete with the forward classes[49]. They quoted the 1995 Act which concluded that the backward classes of citizens are not adequately represented in services under the state in proportion to their population. Another suggestion from some Backward Classes was that the designated other backward classes of communities in the state have to be further classified as 'more backward' and 'most backward' classes and the principle of Creamy Layer shall not be made applicable to them. It was also requested by certain others that the persons engaged in traditional occupations, activities, trade or business shall be excluded from the operation of the creamy layer principle.

The Committee analysed the views, opinions, representations and verified the position of representations of Backward classes of citizens in various governement and semi-government departments, organizations, Institutions, etc. Finally, it evaluated that the Backward Communities as a whole cannot be made eligible for reservation benefit. The Committee found that there are affluent sections in many backward classes capable of competing with the forward classes. In certain departments and Institutions some of the Backward Classes of citizens are over represented. They are found capable of competing with the forward classes of citizens in public services on merit and they have obtained such appointments also in government services[50]. For further validating these findings the Committee examined the various rank lists published by the Kerala Public Service Commission. It is found that there are sufficient quailified candidates applied for appointments in public services and included in the ranked list from among the OBCs in the State[51]. The Committee also has specifically stated that in the absence of qualified persons among the eligible layer for appointment in government services, the wards of those persons excluded by applying the principle of Creamy Layer shall not be appointed[52]. This decision of the Committee is found to be in tune with the decisions of the Supreme Court in Mandal case.

However, the Committee has excluded artisans or those engaged in hereditary occuaptions (Blacksmith, Mason, Carpenter, Goldsmith, Pottery-maker. Cobbler and Cropper and Bronzesmith) from the purview of Creamy Layer among the backward classes of citizens[53]. The Committee has observed and reported that this section of citizens still continues to be socially, economically and educationally backward and hence unable to compete with forward classes of citizens for government employment. Being found in the same position, the Fishermen Community of Kerala is also exempted from the purview of the principle of Creamy Layer.

The committe has prescribed the guidelines to identify the creamy layer among the designated OBCs in the State. It has excluded six categories of persons from reservation benefits[54]. The income limit for enjoying reservation benefit is fixed as Rupees 1.5 lakhs. On complaints and pressures from the Backward Community Organization, the Government as recommended by Justice Narendran Commission, refixed the income limit for job reservation as Rupees 3 Lakhs. The appointment of the Narendran Commission to decide on income limit to determine Creamy Layer is protected by the NSS on the plea that the already existing permanent Backward Class Commission was deliberately prevented from deciding the issue[55]. The NSS has challenged the implementation of the decision of the Commission in the Supreme Court. The Backward Communities Liberation Front leadership has also taken a decision to join in this case, to argue for its cause and protect the reservation benefits now available. This shows that the above issues of reservation and the controversy over it are still alive in Kerala.

Conclusion

In regard to certain basic issues of reservation to the OBCs comparatively a better picture has evolved. There has emerged a better mechanism for detecting the most needy requiring reservation benefits. Of course, the amendments made to the reservation policy has created some difficulties and problems among the Backward Classes. While the Creamy Layer principle is strongly opposed by major and stronger Backward Castes, the minor and most Backward Castes are not found in that hot temper in their attitude. This is because they silently agree

to the fact that the Creamy Layer principle is not so harmful to them since they are mostly low income groups. They think that the reservation benefits available to the OBCs are hijacked by the affluent sections among the powerful Backward Castes.

The issues and problems of reservation are attended by political parties not to solve them but to canvas support of different castes and communities for their interests of political power. So far, no proper study or evaluation of implementation of reservation has been made. Actually the lack of such a study makes things more complex and problematic.

The policy of reservation, definitely, has helped to accelerate the occupational mobility among the OBCs to a cetain extent. But there is no relative mobility among the various Backward Castes. It has been forcing the young persons to acquire higher education so as to attain posts in Government services. This is found to be one reason for increase in literacy rate among OBCs and increase in shift toward non-traditional occupations. Undoubtedly it has resulted in the status emulation of the OBCs. However, the under representation of the OBCs in Government services can be solved only through special recruitment.

Viewed from a different angle, the likely benefits to the OBCs from the job reservation seem to be limited due to the shrinking in the size of Government employment and services in banking and financial sectors following the policy of economic liberalization. In this context the OBCs' dependence on job reservation would not solve the problem of their upliftment. They have to acquire the latest technological skill to compete in the market economy. For this, what is required is the reservation of seats in educational institutions and other educational concessions at a justifiable rate. In fact, development through education has remained as a permanent remedy to the problem of backwardness.

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THE LINGAYAT MUTTS AND THE VOKKALIGARA SANGHA IN KARNATAKA: THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION AND MODERNISATION

Dr. H.M. Rajasekhara

Introduction :

Karnataka is a Southern State of the Indian Union with too many castes, sub-castes, several cultural and religious groups. Among the various caste groups, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Lingayats, the Vokkaligas, and the Kurumbas are major groups whose prime occupation is agriculture. In 1988, the SCs constituted 19 percent, the lingayats 15 percent, and the Vokkaligas 10 percent of the State population[1]. Almost all castes have formed their associations/ organisations for the protection and promotion of their common socio-economic interests. It is unlikely that the caste system would disappear in the near future, despite India being proclaimed as a secular state. "Caste seems incapable of vanishing on its own accord or being destroyed by the corrosive influence exerted by modern education, modern politics and modern economics".[2]

The Lingayat Organisations :

The Veerasaivas or the Lingayats are saivites and vegetarians. They wear 'Linga'-the symbol of God or Shiva. They are largely concentrated in the nothern part of Karnataka and in a few segments in the Mysore region (southern part). After the unification of Karnataka in 1956, they emerged as the dominant caste group.

The Lingayats have been greatly influenced by the holistic and humanistic socio-economic philosophy of Saint Basaveswara, who was a revolutionary social refocmer in the 12th century A.D. The mission of his struggle was the establishment of a casteless, classless, egalitarian and humanitarian society based on love, social harmony and dignity of labour. The Social Reform Movement, he started came to be known as 'the Basava Movement' or 'The Lingayat Movement'. His

'Vachanas' (preachings) composed in simple Kannada language and his 'Programme of Action' did influence the Lingayats and other social reformers to consolidate and continue his movement. In the course of time, the tentacles of the Basava Movement had spread far and wide.

The 19th and the 20th centuries had witnessed the mobilisation of the Lingayats for their socio-economic development. The All-India Veerasaiva Mahasabha and the Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association were formed in 1904 and 1905 respectively for the educational advancemnt, upliftment of the Lingayats in the economic field, to fight against social evils within the community and against injustice they suffered in the society. Besides, several Lingayat Mutts and Organisations have been established to educate, modernise, and mobilise the Lingayats. The most important Mutts are-the Suttu Mutt, the Siddanga Mutt, Sirigere Mutt, Chitradurga Mutt, and the Thontodarya Mutt at Gadag. Other important Lingayat Organisations include the Karnataka Lingayat Education Society at Belgaum, Bijapur Lingayat District Association, Basaveswara Educational Society at Bagalkot, Sharana Basaveswara Educational Society and Hyderabad Karnataka Education Society at Gulburga, Veerasaiva Education Development Society at Bellary, and Renukacharya Education Society at Bangalore.

In 1941, the Lingayats were next only to the Brahmins in the fields of literacy. If the percentage of literacy among the Brahmins was 87.1, it was 32.6 among the Lingayats and 15.2 among the Vokkaligas[3].

Contribution of the Suttur Mutt for Education :

The Suttur Mutt has a history of about 1000 years. 'Suttur' is a village about 30 kilometers away from Mysore city to its southeast located on the banks of Kabini river. The first Pontiff lived during the 11th Century and the Mutt was established here. His birthday is being celebrated as "Suttur Mutt Jayanthi" every year in December on a grand scale. At present, the headquarters of the Suttur Mutt is established in Mysore under the direct supervision and control of the Pontiff.

The late revered Pontiff Shivarathreswara Rejendra Swamiji took initiative to establish the educational institutions in and around Mysore. He started the

"Jagadguru Sree Shivatheswara Vidhya Peetha" with about 30 students. But today there are more than 170 educational institutions in karnataka and outside with 35,000 to 40,000 students[4]. The break-up of the educational institutions are- 7 Shishuviharas, 13 Nurseries, 2 Handicapped Schools, 16 Primary Schools, 6 Teacher's Training Colleges, 52 High Schools, 6 Central Schools, 15 Pre-Degree Colleges, 8 Degree Colleges, 13 Sanskrit and Vedic Schools, 2 Hindi Schools, 4 Technical Colleges, 4 Polytechnics, 3 Industrial Training Centres, 1 Centre for Scientific Studies, 8 Medical and Professional Institutions, 5 Hospitals, 1 Law College, 2 Educational Centres, 5 Different Training Centres, 29 Hostels, including 6 general hostels, 2 Refugee Centres, 10 Arts and Science Centres, 7 Cooperative Institutions, 13 Trusts, including an Agricultural Training Institute at Sattur, 4 Cooperative Societies, 12 Literacy Cultural and Fine Arts Centres, 3 Destitute Homes, and 14 Orphanages.

Students from different social groups are being admitted to these educational institutions. In a few hostels, free boarding facilities for the poor students are provided. The present Pontiff, Sri Deshikendra Swamiji is doing a great service to strengthen and sustain the institutions.

The Siddaganga Mutt:

The Siddaganga Mutt has a hoary tradition of about 600 years. It is located in Tumkur about 70 kilometres away from Bangalore and has a few parallels in the saga of education with more than 4800 students being fed, housed and educated free of cost, irrespective of caste or creed under one roof for the last several years. Its present Pontiff, Sri. Shivakumara Swamiji, a Savant and highly respected, is a staunch follower of Basaveswara's philosophy - "Work is Worship". He has devoted his entire life since 1930 to the cause of the poor, down-trodden and the disadvantaged.

"The Siddaganga Education Society," headed by this great Pontiff, has about 98 educational institutions including 21 public service organisations. Most of them are located in the rural areas.

The Mutt itself runs a Sanskrit School, a Nursery, a Primary School, 2 High Schools, Teachers' Training College and a School for the visually handicapped children. The Siddaganga Institute of Technology established in 1963 offers various courses in engineering.

In our caste-ridden society, it is amazing to see that the students belonging to 85 communities, including SCs, Muslims, Christians and others are getting education here. About half of the students belong to the Lingayat Community. This Mutt has attracted the students from the neighbouring States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It has become a base for cultural solidarity and national integration.

The hostel contains about 200 rooms, catering to the needs of its incumbents numbering about 1600. The Prasada Nilaya, built at a cost of Rs.4 Crores, has been providing food and shelter to thousands of children.

The Vokkaliga Community :

The Vokkaliga Community is a farming community in the Southern Karanataka which includes several sub-caste groups. The major sub-caste groups are the Gangadikar and Namdhari Vokkaligas (residing in Hassan, Mandya and Mysore Districts), Marasu Vokkaligas (Kolar and Bangalore), Das Vokkaligas (Hassan), Reddy Vokkaligas (Chitradurga and Kolar), Kunchitigas (Tumkur), Bunts (Dakshina Kannada District).

Birth of the Vokkaligara Sangha :

Abject poverty, educational backwardness and social disintegration had caused miseries and sufferings to the Vokkaliga Community in the early part of the 20th Century. Some leaders of this community did realize the significance of the collective efforts through organisation for the upliftment and advancement of their people. B.S. Marappa who hailed from Kolar, became a forerunner for this cause and had donated Rs.30,000 towards the formation of the Vokkaligara Sangha. Besides, T.Bayyanna, B.S.Muniswamappa, Barrister Nagappa, M.Subbaiah, K.H.Ramaiah and others took initiative for the mobilization of the Vokkaligas.

The efforts of these Vokkaliga leaders culminated in the establishment of the Vokkaligara Sangha on 1st April 1906, with its headquarters at Bangalore. The land was provided by the Maharaja of Mysore. Now there are about 36,000 members in the Vokkaligara Sangha.

After the formation of the Vokkaligara Sangha, a series of conferences were held in Bangalore (1906 & 1908), Mysore(1907) and Hassan for the mobilisation and consolidation of the Vokkaligas.

Objectives of the Vokkaligara Sangha :

(1) Development of the spirit of adventure and competitiveness among the Vokkaliga youths through education and training;

(2) Upliftment and development of the Vokkaliga Commuity through mobilization, awakening and cooperation;

(3) Modernisation of agriculture and social life;

(4) Promotion of oneness and unity among the different sub-castes of the Vokkaliga Community; and the

(5) Inculcation of national feeling and patriotism among the Vokkaligas.

The Executive Committee :

The Executive Committee has 35 members. They are elected for 3 years from different districts. The district-wise representation is as follows :

(1)	Bangalore City and District	:	15 members
(2)	Mysore District	:	03 members
(3)	Mandya District	:	04 members
(4)	Hassan District	:	03 members
(5)	Kolar District	:	03 members
(6)	Tumkur District	:	02 members
(7)	Chitradurga District	:	01 member
(8)	Dakshina Kannada District (South Canara)	:	01 member
(9)	Coorg District	:	01 member
(10)	Shimoga District	:	01 member
(11)	Chikmagalur District	:	01 member

Office-Bearers :

The President, the two Vice-Presidents, the General Secretary, and the Joint Secretary, Treasurer and the Accountant are elected by the members of the Executive Council.

Establishment of Educational Institutions :

Education helps the people for their development and modernisation. It is also a powerful instrument to organise themselves as well as to fight for their rights and justice. Realising the potentiality of education as an instrument of change and advancement, the Vokkaligara Sangha has established about 17 educational institutions in Bangalore.

(a) Primary and Secondary Educational Institutions :

(1) Vokkaligara Sangha Nursery and Primary School.(1980)

(2) Vokkaligara Sangha Middle School

(3) Vokkaligara Sangha High School. (1975)

(4) Junior College (Pre-degree College)(1982)

(b) Institutions of Higher Education :

(1) Visveswarapuram (V.V. Puram) Arts and Commerce College, (1966).

(2) V.V.Puram Arts and Commerce Evening College.(1967).

(3) V.V.Puram Science College,(1967).

(4) Srigandadakavalu First Grade Arts College, (1993).

(c) Professional and Training Institutions :

(1) V.V. Puram Law College(1972)

(2) Bangalore Institute of Technology (1979). (It has 9 departments with more than 2000 students)

(3) Kempe Gowda Institute of Medical Science (1989)

(4) Kempe Gowda Pharmacy College (1980)

(5) Vokkaligara Sangha Dental College (1986)

(6) Kempe Gowda Nursing School,

(7) Vokkaligara Sangha Industrial Training Centre (1993)

(8) Srigandada Kavalu Professional Education Institute to train people in Sericulture, agriculture and Mechanical Engineering (1987).

(d) Hostels :

There are five hostels out of which one is a free boarding hostel. About 250 students are being fed in this hostel, who come from poor Vokkaliga families.

Besides, the Vokkaligara Sangha had organised a massive rally in Bangalore on July 25th, 1994 to protest against the recommendations of the Backward Classes Commission headed by the Justice Chinnappa Reddy. More than 10 lakh Vokkaligas had congregated in this so called "Vokkaligara Samavesha". The Chinnappa Reddy Commission had excluded the Vokkaligas from the list of Backward Communities.

However, the circumstances forced the Government of Karnataka to modify its recommendations and the Vokkaligas were included in the list of the Backward Communities.

Future plans of the Vokkaligara Sangha :

(1) Establishment of Agricultural Science College,

(2) Establishment of Residency College,

(3) Introduction of new professional and technical courses,

(4) Establishment of educational institutions in District Headquarters,

(5) Construction of Commuity Halls in the importance places,

(6) Housing facilities for the poor and staff of the Vokkaligara Sangha,

(7) Educating the Vokkaliga community about family values, simple marriages and their obligations towards the community and society,

(8) Establishment of Vokkaligara Cooperative Bank,

(9) Helping the poor farmers of the community.

Conclusion :

The establishment of the educational institutions by the Lingayat Mutts and Organisations has helped the poor students of this Community and others to get education, and to enter into services in both private / government sectors. In the process their economic development has been improved and social mobilisation has been strengthened.

The Vokkaligara Sangha has become a role model in the field of social service. So far, it has done a yeoman service to its community. Its contribution to the upliftment of the community through education and mobilisation has been widely acknowledged and appreciated.

Under its direct or indirect influence, many other Vokkaliga Educational Institutions have been established for the benefit of the community. These include : The Bharat Education Society, and the Vivekananda Educational Institutions at Bangalore, Kuvempu First Grade College at Channapatna, H.K. Veeranna Gowda First Grade College at Maddur, Bharathi Educational Institutions at Bharathinagar, Shanthi College at Malavalli, Vijaya College at Pandavapura, Rural College at Kanakapura, and different institutions of higher education established by the People's Education Society at Mandya. The Adichunchanagiri Mutt has established about 350 Educational Institutions.

Today, the Vokkaliga Community is a dominant and powerful community. Its concentration in the Cauvery and Hemavathi belt has helped it to irrigate the land and modernise agriculture. This has led to the improvement of its economic conditions. It is also socially consolidated and politically assertive and competitive. The Vokkaliga Community's social and political dominance is a phenomenon in the Mandya and Hassan districts and influential in Bangalore and Mysore districts.

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THE DALIT SANGHARSH SAMITI IN KARNATAKA
A Study of its struggle for justice and Emancipation

Dr. D. Jeevan Kumar and K. Ananda

The Dalit movement has played a significant role in the social, cultural, economic and political life of our country. By focussing its attention on the sub-human treatment, oppression and exploitation of the Dalits, it simultaneously questioned the very rationality and basis of the Hindu society. It thereby forced a critical examination of the established beliefs, customs, traditions and culture. All this was done partly through education and propaganda and partly through militant struggles. Annihilation of the caste system and replacing it with an egalitarian social order are not easy tasks. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar provided the movement with a philosophy, defined and delineated its objectives in the 1920s and 1930s, evolved strategies, built up organizations, and launched various struggles for justice and emancipation. Inspired by his efforts and recognizing the need for continuing the struggle, many organizations have sprung up in various parts of the country in the post-Ambedkar period. The Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Karnataka is one such organisation.

The status of the Dalits in Karnataka was no different from their counterparts elsewhere. Untouchability, social boycott, atrocities, hunger and poverty, characterized their daily lives. Unable to bear them longer, and dissatisfied with the limited base and role of the existing Dalit organizations, the educated Dalit youth rose in revolt in the 1970s. *The Dalit Action Committee and the Dalit Student Federation* were formed at Mysore and Kolar, respectively, in 1974. A meeting was called for in the Siddarth Students' Hostel in Mysore, in 1975, for giving a shape to their ideas. Members of various Dalit associations from Kolar, Bhadravathi, Mysore, Bangalore and other places, participated in it. The need for a state-level movement to consolidate the various disparate struggles currently under-way, was emphasized. An important meeting was convened at Bhadravathi in December 1976, which was attended, in addition to those who participated earlier, by writers and artists. In June 1977, at a meeting of various Dalit organizations, the name *Karnataka Dalit Sangharsh Samiti* was given, by merging the existing, participating Dalit associations in the State. Prominent among those

who helped to lay the foundation for a state-wide organization to spearhead the struggle for justice and emancipation were Dr. Siddalingaiah, Devanoor, Mahadeva, B. Krishnappa, K. Ramaiah, Indudhara Honnapura, Manchaiah, Govindaiah, N. Venkatesh and others.

Branch units of the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS) were set up in all districts, taluks, hoblis and villages of the State by 1978. A band of dedicated workers conducted enrollment camps in every nook and corner of Karnataka where protest songs and streetplays captured the imagination of the oppressed. Farm labourers, small and marginal farmers, students and women joined the organization in large numbers. The DSS conducted training camps to educate and enlighten the workers on the philosophy, and methods of struggle, being advocated.

Drafting a Constitution for the DSS, acceptable to all its founding fathers, was no easy task. This work progressed labouriously and yet steadily. It was ready in November 1984 and was formally released at a function at Bheemanagar in Dharwad district on the 18th of November that year.

Aims and Objectives of the DSS[1]

The DSS Constitution had identified the following aims and objectives of the Samiti:

1. Dalit emancipation has to be done from cultural, social and economic inequalities which have taken root in all spheres of life. This aim of emancipation has to be achieved through non-violent means.
2. All the nation's wealth and means of production have been concentrated in the hands of a few upper castes and classes. The tools of wealth have to be socialized, and a casteless and classless society has to be built. This aim was incorporated into the Indian Constitution with the stipulation that it was to be achieved within ten years; this was the aspiration of Dr. Ambedkar. Since this aspiration has remained just a dream so far, it has to be realized.
3. Self-respect and freedom struggles at the national and international levels have to be honoured and supported.

4. Religious atrocities against minorities have to be opposed.

5. A foundation based on love, equality and fraternity must be established.

6. People must be convinced of the truth that cultural evolution would be completed only when the untouchables were emancipated from casteist and religious bigotry.

Plan of Action of the DSS[2]

The DSS Constitution also identifies a Plan of Action, to attain the foregoing objectives:

1. Taking a pledge for removing social inequalities.

2. Agitating for educational facilities for Dalits.

3. Protesting against assault, atrocities and murder committed on the Dalits.

4. Demanding equal political oppurtunities.

5. Removing Untouchability.

6. Carrying on land agitations from the economic viewpoint of the Dalits.

7. Expressing solidarity with all the exploited the Dalits.

8. Formulating agitational programmes, while simultaneously creating unity of the backward classes and minorities for securing peace and harmony.

9. Providing protection for the Dalit culture through retention and development of their folklore.

10. Protection of the rights of the farm labourers and leather workers.

11. Arranging for training camps for the Dalits, intellectual growth, and establishing study centres involving progressive thinkers and intellectuals.

12. Giving more thrust to inter-caste and simple marriage celebrations.
13. Publishing literature on the Dalits.
14. Arranging programmes on health, hygiene and enviornmental protection.
15. Exerting pressure on the government to ensure that all original literature of Dr. Ambedkar reaches the common man.
16. Convincing other organizations of the necessity for a cultural revolution.
17. Creating awareness among the public regarding the failure to establish a socialistic pattern of society, and to strive to remove the obstacles in its path.
18. Retaining the DSS as a people's movement.

Duties of Members of the DSS[3]

The Constitution of the DSS further lays down a list of duties to be followed by its members:

1. Active participation in all its programmes.
2. Loyalty to the DSS Constitution and to the principles enshrined therein.
3. Enhancement of the intellectual understanding of the members as regards the nation's and Dalit groups' political, economic. social and cultural problems.
4. Maintenance of courteous and friendly contacts with all sections of the society.
5. Opposition to, and struggle against, propoganda counter to the DSS interests.
6. Non-indulgence in individual blame, groupism and anti-DSS actvities.
7. Obidience to majority decisions and higher committee decisions.
8. Differences should not be aired in public.
9. Increased recognition should be given to value-based programmes.
10. Priority for protection of the interests of municipal employees and leather workers.

Sister Organizations of the DSS[4]

The DSS had established the following as its sister organizations:

1. Dalit Students' Federation.
2. Dalit Women's Federation.
3. Dalit Employees' Federation.
4. Dalita Kala Mandali.
5. Dalit Writers' and Artists' Federation.
6. Municipal and Leather Workers' Organization.

Each of the above organizations has been set up separately by the DSS, so as to better protect the interest of the particular constituency of members. A DSS Convener serves on the executive committee of each organization.

1. Dalit Students' Federation (DSF)

This is a students' wing of the DSS, and is in existence since the begining of the movement. With a strength of more than 50,000 students, it is easily the most vigorous of the sister organizations of the DSS. It has its own Constitution, and its aims, objectives, responsibilities and rights are described there in. It discusses the burning issues confronting Dalit students and analyses them in context. It has organized three state-level conferences at Bangalore, Kolar and Gulburga, so far. The DSF fights for better hostel facilities, increase in students' freeship, and more employment oppurtunities. Simultaneously, it highlights atrocities committed on Dalits.

2. Dalit Women's Federation (DWF)

This wing of the DSS has been assisting women-in-distress in Karnataka since 1982-83, by condemning the continuing atrocities, injustice and harassment done to women. The DSS, with the help of the DWF, launched a powerful protest movement in 1984 at Chandragutti in Shimoga District, and brought severe presure

on the government to stop the pernicious practice of "nude worship". The DWF is in the forefront of other political, social and economic struggles, and is fighting for the removal of the Devadasi system, providing equal pay for equal work for women, and starting cottage industries for women. It has conducted conferences, seminars and training camps, jointly with the DSS. Currently, however, the DWF appears to be inactive.

3. Dalit Employees' Federation (DEF)

Dalit employees working in public sector undertakings like HMT, HAL and ITI , and public sector banks, like the Syndicate Bank, State Bank of India and State Bank of Mysore, as also teaching and non-teaching staff in the Universities, colleges and schools, are active members of the DEF. Over 10,000 employees are currently members of the Federation. It has been protesting and condemning the continuing atrocities and high-handedness of upper caste supervisory staff vis-a-vis Dalit subordinates in the above organizations. However, the main focus of the DEF has been the struggle for reservation and related benefits of protective discrimination guaranteed to the Dalits under the Constitutional and legal provisions. The DEF is an important wing of the DSS, and even provides moral and financial support to the latter.

4. Dalit Kala Mandali (DKM)

Noticing an inferiority complex in the Dalits in the field of arts and literature, several intellectuals got together to launch a cultural movement under the auspices of an Arts Council. Using music as a binding force, groups of artists move around in busy streets and thoroughfares, and in buses and trains, singing catchy tunes extolling Dalit culture. The DKM has a unique stamp and appeal, and has been able to capture the imagination of viewers and listeners. Initially, the songs were translations from Telugu; subsequently, they were. and are, being written in Kannada. Several of the popular tunes are as. if not more, popular than cinema songs. The DKM continues to be a lively and enthusiastic constitutent of the DSS.

5. Dalit Writers' and Artists' Federation (DWAF)

Considered to be its think-tank, the DWAF is easily the most important wing of the DSS. Through its active efforts, Dalit literature has come to represent a new literary tradition. Important writers like Dr. Siddalingaiah, Devanoor Mahadeva, Gangadhara Murthy, K. Ramaiah, Govindaiah, Indudara Honnapura, and several others have been striving to create a new 'social consiousness' among Dalits. In addition, a new brand of bandaya (revolutionary) literature promoted by intellectuals like Dr. Baraguru Ramachandrappa, Chandreshekar Patil, Allama Prabhu Bettaduru and others, has succeeded in focussing the attention of the thinking public of the Dalit cause.

Structure and Organization of the DSS[5]

The structure and organization of the DSS is as follows:

1. Village Committee

Every Village has at least ten primary members. These members elect three representatives, a Convener, an Organizing Convener and a Treasurer.

2. Group Panchayat Committee

The three representatives of all Village Committees coming under the jurisdiction of a Panchayat meet and elect three representatives as Convener, Organising Convener and Treasurer. This body is called a Group Panchayat Committee.

3. Hobali Committee

The three representatives of all Group Panchayat Committees coming under the jurisdiction of a Hobali meet and elect three representatives as Convener, Organising Convener and Treasurer. This body is called the Hobali Committee.

4. Taluk Committee

The three representatives of all Hobali Committees coming under the jurisdiction of a Taluk meet and elect three representatives as Convener, Organizing Convener and Treasurer. This body is called the Taluk Committee.

5. **Town Committee**

A Town Committee is constituted in every Taluk. At a meeting of the primary members coming under the jurisdiction of a town, three representatives are elected as Convener, Organizing Convener and Treasurer, respectively.

6. **District Committee**

All the members of the Taluk and Town Committees meet and elect the three members of the District Committee, namely, the Convener, Organizing Convener and Treaurer.

7. **Divisional Committee**

All the members of the Town and District Committees meet and elect the three members of the Divisional Committee, namely, the Convener, Organizing Convener and Treasurer.

NOTE:1) Elections for all the above bodies are to be held once in two years.

2) Only local people are eligible to contest the elections for each of the above bodies.

8. **State Committee**

All the selected members of the Taluk, Town, District and Divisional Committees constitute the electorate to elect the six members of the State Committee. This Committee comprises of the following members:

1) Convener;
2) Organizing Convener-I (overall);
3) Organizing Convener-II (internal discipline);
4) Organizing Convener-III (labour);
5) Organizing Convener (Dalits, Backward Classes and Minorities); and
6) Treasurer.

Executive Committee

In addition to the three elected members of the Village Committee, four elected members are to be elected. The seven members together constitute the Executive Committee of the Village Committee.

The Convener of the Village Committee is an ex-officio member of the Group Panchayat Committee. Likewise, the Convener of the Group Panchayat Committee is an ex-officio member of the Hobali Committee. Similarly, the Conveners of each Committee at the lower level are ex-officio members of the higher level Committees.

According to the Constitution of the DSS, the Conveners of sister organizations like the Dalit Students' Federation are to be co-opted to the Hobali Committee. In practice, however, this is being followed in each of the committees.

Discipline in the DSS[6]

The Constitution of the DSS prescribes the discipline to be followed in the DSS. The following norms of discipline are to be compulsorily observed and followed by the cadres at all levels:

1. The respective Committees at various levels have been conferred the power to suspend any cadre in the event of violating the norms of discipline. However, such power of suspension should be used with the prior approval of the State Committee of the DSS.
2. Any Committee at the grass-root, taluk or district, level which is involved in working against the principles of DSS and norms of discipline, can be suspended or removed or dismissed from the DSS by a high-level committee after the prior approval of the State-level Committee.
3. A 'Show Cause' Notice should be given before any member of a Committee is suspended, dismissed or removed from the DSS.
4. Provision for appeal to a high level Committee should be provided in the event of suspension or removal from any cadre. However, the decission of the State-level Committee will be final:

5. Any action of a High-level Committee in suspending or removing any member should be immediately made known to the State-level Committee in the form of a report.

6. Any action of a disciplinary nature taken by a lower-level Committee needs to be approved by the next higher-level Committee, before being implemented.

DSS Conferences[7]

The Constitution of the DSS unambiguously emphazises the utility of the periodic conferences to bring cadres together so as to undertake a balance sheet of the progress made and to chart out the future course of action:

1. To strengthen the DSS, conference should be held by the DSS to propogate the principles and policies of the organization.

2. The conferences should be attended by the primary members and cadres of the DSS.

3. Taluk, District and State-level conferences should be held at least once a year, once in two years and once in three years, respectively.

4. All conferences should be organized in coordination with the respective higher-level Ccommittees.

Growth and Current Status of the Dalit Sangharsh Samiti in Karnataka

The initial bases of the DSS were the small branches of the Ambedkar Yuvak Mandal, functioning practically in every village in the State. Hundreds of such branches were brought together under the single banner of the DSS. Within a short span of its existence, the DSS was able to muster sufficient strength to fight any atrocity against the Dalits at the three crucial levels of village, taluk and district. At each of these levels, branches of the DSS organized their own determined, devoted and morally committed cadres. The founding fathers of the

DSS provided the necessary inspiration and guidance. It was a rare combination of writers, scholars, poets, dramatists and singers who joined hands with the DSS to give it voice, vigour and strength. When B. Krishnappa was the commander-in-chief of the organization, Siddalingaiah was its poet, and Devanoor Mahadev its thinker. Each one contributed in his own unique way to the growth and development of the DSS. In course of time, several other Dalit writers emerged giving rise to what is known as new Dalit literature, new knowledge and new forms of protest in Karnataka[8].

In the first phase, the DSS took up issues of land problems pertaining to the Dalits. Later on, the scope of agitation was widened to include issues of untouchability, atrocities, exploitation of labourers and employees, consumption of liquor, religious practices like nude worship and the like. The DSS also gave due consideration to the neglected sub-castes of the Dalits, and helped to integrate them into the Dalit mainstream. By mingling with the Dalit groups and communities at the village level, DSS workers were able to understand their individual and collective problems, and offer the services of the Samiti to resolve them. The DSS organized agitations whenever and wherever any instance of exploitation and humiliation came to light. The constant guiding light and inspiration for the DSS was the life and philosophy of Dr. B.R Ambedkar. The DSS, in fact, always emphazised that it does not believe in following the path of violence to achieve its objectives, or to take revenge for the acts of injustice; the means to the end must always be non-violent. Further, the DSS does not believe that securing justice only for the exploited Dalits is the ultimate objective; instead it is its firm belief that all the exploited sections of society should get justice and equality. To this end, the DSS had been striving to unite the weaker sections including the backward classes and minorities, based on its conviction that it will not be possible to remove exploitation unless all the exploited unite. All these factors account for its phenomenal growth throughout the State in a relatively short span of time.

Howerver, fissures in the upper echelons of the DSS soon began to surface, particularly after the founding of the Bahujan Samaj Party at the national level, over the issue of degree of proximity to this new entity. When prof. B. Krishnappa, the State Convener, realized that he no longer enjoyed the confidence of all, he began to distance himself from DSS politics, which only made matters worse.

There is also the charge that at this critical juncture, other leaders like Devanooru Mahadeva and Dr. Siddalingaiah took faulty and unwise steps. Some see the hand of Ramakrishna Hedge in trying to sabotage the Dalit movement, after becoming the Chief Minister of Karnataka in the 1980s. Today, the DSS is a pale shadow of the original, struggling to come to terms with the new realities. While it continues to be active in organizing protests, launching agitations and holding public meetings, those closely associated with it state that the old revolutionary fervor and missionary zeal are missing. What could be the reason for this climb-down in the status of the DSS, which at one point of time had "become organizationally the strongest and long-lasting Dalit movement in the country"?[9] Six of the major explanations merit our consideration:[10]

1. In attempting to derive solace within the framework of Hinduism itself, the DSS succumbed to the same evils with which it was crossing swords. Neither did it fully reject the Hindu caste system, nor did it cling to it. Knowingly or unknowingly, it could only try its strategies within the given social system of Hinduism. The symbol of DSS also indicated a form of traditional slavery: a pick-axe with a sweeping broom was choosen as its symbol of self-respect, in contrast to the Dharma Chakra and blue flag of the Maharashtra Dalit Panthers. Dancing and drum-beating were represented as Dalit arts. In fact, the DSS promoted all the Dalit traits which finally led the Dalits back into their own sort. *The laxity on the part of the Dalit movement to consider the question of recognizing the Dalits into an alternative mode of living always kept the Dalits bound to their old cultural patterns which ultimately meant nothing but the Hindu Caste System, Untouchability and every thing associated with them.* (Emphasis ours)

2. Lack of homogeneity, unity and integrity among the various Dalit communities, which was to emerge out of the cultural liberation visualized by Ambedkar, prevented the DSS from forming a political force of their own state. Empowering, simply means enabling. But this enabling process did not take place at all. There was no corresponding link between the Dalit politicians and the self-styled non-political Dalit organizations. Neither did these organizations strengthen the hands of the Dalit politicians, nor

did they identify with the Republican Party of India, designed by Ambedkar himself. This apparently neutral political stance of the DSS left the entire Dalit mass in a politically bewildered state of affairs, and at the mercy of political parties dominated by their userpers.

3. With some of the top grade DSS leaders having joined the mainstream politics in the state, the DSS, as of now, is leaderless and that is why, direction-less. Further, it split into many factions, each one claiming to be the real DSS. Dalit politicians already joined the mainstream society by compromising with the larger oppressive system. Those who have entered the higher echelons of the power structure like the IAS/IPS have also formed a class of their own. The larger Dalit society as such has remained as it is. Thus Ambedkar's dream to unite the Dalits under a single political banner and thereby make them a powerful political force, remains a far cry. Consequently, the Dalits in Karnataka automatically remain politically powerless, dependent and unorganized.

4. Independent of the Constitution, Ambedkar had favoured a ' self-reliant' parallel economy of Dalits, with their own organized banking system, cooperative societies, agricultural colonies, industrial units and the like. This was to come through a sheer self-help movement emerging out of the spirit of self-respect and self-reliance. But all the Dalit organizations in Karnataka, like elsewhere in India, concentrated only on the three words of Ambedkar, "educate, organize and agitate", totally forgetting the other themes like "self-respect, self-help and self-reliance" which contained the real philosophy of Ambedkar. The Dalits' firm belief in their practise of what they considered as Dalit culture or way of life, or their pride in what they claimed as 'Dalit is dignified' always kept them bound by the chains of submission of Hinduism or its exploitative hegemony. They never built their own world - secure and independent - which they could have done. No organization provided a curriculum which could inspire a Dalit to look within himself and discover his weakness or strength.

5. Dalits should know the difference between the prop and the leg and learn to forgo the prop, whether it is reservation, a government scheme or any such provisional guarantee, because it will only strength and increase the

dependancy syndrome amongst them, and lead to a feeling of helplessness from which there is no escape. But so far, no Dalit has dared to do this. Today, even a matriculate Dalit looks at the government 'for a job', as if his birth was caused by an act of the government. He is reluctant to realize the fact that formal education alone has nothing to do with his practical life. So far, there is no combined effort to look at life from a pragmatic point of view. As such, Dalit liberation has become a riddlesome issue.

6. The DSS retained its mutual links with other movements as well. But it did this with a clear perspective of its allies and enemies. It regarded the farmers, peasants, landless labourers, factory workers and the left parties as its allies, whereas capitalist, feudalistic and communal forces were treated as enemies. But the glaring disparities between the Dalits and their allies always kept them poles apart. "It is not surprising if Sharad Joshi, Naidu or Nanjundaswamy are not able to sell their ruralist ideology to the Dalits, especially when urban employment opportunities act as an outlet for the Dalits to escape the socio-economic oppression in the villages."[11] Naturally, the alliance between farmers' and Dalit mevements became superficial and useless. The Dalits are yet to break their chains at the lower level to join the mainstream society.

While the issues raised by the critics must be taken into account in evaluating the role and strategies of the DSS in seeking justice and emancipation for the Dalits, it must also be stated that some of the points lack objectivity and practicability. Seeking cultural emancipation by embracing Buddhism, striving for political power, creating a self-reliant parallel economy and forsaking reservation-are contoversial decisions that cannot be taken in a hurry. In fact, the decision taken by some DSS leaders to contest elections, raised a major controversy and posed the first big threat to the unity of the organization. Suggestions for the creation of a parallel economy by the Dalits, are easier to say than to be done. Given the reality where Dalit assertion of dignity and rights are being met with atrocities by the upper castes, the fate of a parallel economy can well be imagined. Suggestions for forsaking reservations, too, seem too premature at this point of time in Dalit emancipation. While the creamy layer conept can perhaps be

justified, studies have shown the tremendous impact of compensatory discrimination policies on the first generation beneficiaries. The reality is that even the prescribed quota for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes is not being filled in the institutions of government, due to manipulation and sabotage. Decisions on many of the suggestions made by critics, cannot be taken in a hurry, and need the hammering out of consensus. When the opinion is sharply divided on the controversial issues, the prudent course of action would be to relegate them to the backward and concentrate on the more acceptable ones. This has been the overall policy of the DSS.

Concluding Observations

While it cannot be denied that the DSS is currently undergoing a crisis, there is an urgent need for the organization to pull up its socks and take steps to remedy the situation. With the Indian economy rapidly integrating itself with world capital and world markets, the consequences of such integration and globalization are already being felt by the Dalits and other oppressed castes[12]. Future trends are clearly visible. Valuable resources like forests, lands, minerals and even bio-diversity are all being steadily expropriated and appropriated. Acceptance of the capitalist model of development means increased demand for water and electricity, which in turn means even further displacement of people by big dams and hydro-electric projects. Agriculture is acquiring a corporate logic under the new dispensation. As a result of its industrialization and corporatization, food crops are being replaced by cash crops, floriculture and aquaculture, all with an eye on the international market. The era of dependance on the international market has begun. This is already proving disastrous for the small and marginal farmers, many of whom are driven to suicide, due to bankruptcy and pauperization. With the entry of genetically-modified, patented seeds into the market, it will become practically impossible for the farmer to continue with traditional methods of earning his livelihood.

Privatization and dis-investment in the public sector is progressing at a brisk pace. Governments are downsizing. With the shrinkage of public space, reservation will soon become meaningless. The marginalized sections cannot even dream of employment in the new hi-tech and I.T. industries, due to lack of

education and requisite skills. The only employment available will be in the form of demeaning and degrading jobs in the tourism and entertainmant industries. The retreat of the state welfare and public services is seriously affecting the poor and the marginalized. Consequently, there is an absence of food security and lack of access to education, health, housing and transport facilities.

The impact of the above developments on the Dalits and other oppressed castes can easily be visualized. Even among these sections, women will be the most hard hit. Migration for survival will become the order of the day. Should not the DSS reinvigorate itself to face this situation? The need of the hour is to launch a vibrant ideological struggle, the contours of which could be along the lines suggested by the Commission on Dalits and Other Oppressed Castes.

The basic task is to build the broadest possible unity in the movement of all the oppressed sections of society. This unity should be at three levels. First of all, there has to be unity of all the Dalits. This unity has to overcome the existing differences. Next, the Dalits have to unite with the Other Oppressed Castes, particularly those who are in a comparable position to the Dalits. Then, an even broader unity has to be established involving all those whose interests, livelihood and existence are being challenged by the forces of globalization. Gender and enviornmental issues, along with a critique of consumerist and acquisitive values, need to be included in the new discourse.

The strong characteristics retained by the DSS, in spite of recent vicissitudes, are the committed leadership, mass base, decentralized organizational structure and acceptability of the Dalit community, generally. The DSS must utilize these assets to renew its struggle against the contemporary forces of exploitation.

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8 Manohar Yadav, "Career of Dalit Movement in Karnataka", **Journal of Social and Economic Development,** Vol.I, No.1, Jan-June 1998, p. 116.

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12 *The phrase, Other Oppressed Castes* is used in the report of the **Commission of Dalits and Other Oppressed Castes,** constituted by the Indian National Social Action Forum. We prefer this term to the more popular one, *Other Backward Classes (OBCs),* because all Backward Classes are not uniformly oppressd, and also because of the competitive struggle for being categorized as *backward* among even the better-off backward classes.

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DIALECTIC OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE STRUGGLE OF THE MADIGAS FOR CATEGORISATION OF SCHEDULED CASTE RESERVATIONS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Dr. K.C.Suri

During the years 1995-2000 the Madigas of Andhra Pradesh, the single largest community among the Scheduled Castes of the State, waged a protracted struggle for categorisation of Scheduled Caste reservations to ensure that the benefits of reservations are equally distributed among all the Scheduled Castes (SCs) population. It has raised several questions of far reaching significance to Indian state and society. In the course of the struggle, various intircate aspects of social justice, caste system, collective identities and development came to the fore.

The working out of the contradictory pressures between the broad categories of upper and lower castes is too familiar a phenomenon in Indian Society[1]. There have been also struggles for the categorisation of reservations among the backward castes in some States.[2] The Madiga movement, for the first time, set into motion the dormant tensions among the Scheduled Castes. It has shown that the SCs are not a simple and homogeneous entity, as often imagined and constructed by the social elites, including the dalit elites; that the term 'Scheduled Castes' itself is a broad category that contained several distinct groups with prejudices, animosities and inequalities embedded among them which need to be addressed, reformed and overcome. In their assertion of separate identity the Madigas sought to introduce changes in the way the different caste formations among the Scheduled Castes connect themselves with the general dalit identity and to the society at large. If the dalit movement was aimed at achieving equality in the society by its ideology of opposition to the dominance of the upper castes, the Madigas' movement was a logical extension of this counter-ideology by questioning the dominance of one segment of the dalits over other segments.

Similarly, the principles of social justice, which became the basis for providing reservations to the disadvantaged groups, were sought to be applied to arrive at a just distribution of benefits among them. If social justice is about

closing the social and economic gap between different segments of the society by providing support to those at the lower level, the Madiga movement precisely raised this question within the SCs. In demanding the categorisation, that is, setting fixed proportions apart for the subgroups among the SCs that are distinguished by disparity in their ability to avail reservation when bunched together, the Madiga leaders pointed out that social justice has not one but two interrelated aspects: to provide reservations to the disadvantaged and, equally and importantly, to ensure equal distribution of benefits among them.

Where the opportunities available under reservations are limited, where every individual and community would seek to maximise their interest, and where inequalities prevail among different layers of the SC category, the conditions would conduce the better-off segments to secure more benefits. This is by virtue of their better capacities to avail these benefits in the open competition among the SCs since the opportunities are equally open to all the members of the Scheduled Castes, irrespective of the sub-caste identity. Here is the case of inequalities arising out of the operation of the principle of full equality of opportunity among the disadvantaged groups. In other words, if reservations were meant to suspend the principle of absolute and formal equality of opportunity for a while to promote substantive equality and just distribution of valued goods, bunching together of unequal groups in a reservation category might not only fail to redress the inequalities that prevailed but also aggravate the inequalities due to full equality of opportunity among them.

The struggle of the Madigas was led by 'Madiga Dandora', (Madiga Drumbeat) an autonomous organisation of the Madigas founded by some educated Madiga youth in 1995.[3] It was conducted under the banner of the 'Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti' (Madiga Reservation Struggle Committee), popularly called MRPS. The leaders argued that since justice requires that no one shall gain at the expense of the other, injustice was done to a large number of SCs because the Malas, the more advanced community among the SCs, got disproportionately benefited by the reservations, thus depriving other castes of what is due to them. They also felt that in a complexly stratified society, that India is, the Madigas were being oppressed by Malas, as much as the SCs were oppressed by the upper castes.

The Dandora leadership came out with a way to resolve the contradiction between the Madigas and the Malas, which it perceived to be of utmost importance to the Madigas. It felt that a just distribution of benefits is possible only by classifying the SCs into A, B, C and D categories, similar to the categorisation made in the case of backward castes in the State, and fixing quotas to different castes in proportion to their population. Although the demand of the Madiga Dandora appeared to be very simple and fair enough for many it set into motion a bitter conflict between the votaries of the Madiga and the Mala communities. It witnessed a great deal of political drama and convulsions and a series of legal battles in the courts.

The Social Background of the Madiga Movement :

Andhra Pradesh is one of the major States with a large concentration of the SC population in the country. As per the 1991 census the population of the SCs stood at 10.59 millions, accounting for about 16 percent of the total population of the State and about 8 percent of the total SC population of the country. Although there are 59 listed Scheduled Castes in the State, the Madigas and the Malas are the two major groups, together making up nearly 90 percent of the State's SC population.[4] In terms of numerical strength the Madigas and the Malas stand in fourth and fifth positions among the SCs of India.

All the Scheduled Castes of Andhra Prasesh share the common characteristic of being treated once untouchable by the Savarna Hindus. The 9 point criteria developmed by Hutton, the colonial anthropoligist and Census Commissioner in 1931, to identify the untouchable castes were applicable to them. Although untouchability has been abolished by the Indian Constitution a large majority of them still suffer from the traditional stigma of untouchability attached to them and are subjected to social discrimination. This is especially so in the rural areas. Most of the SC population are landless; more than two-thirds of the workers among the SCs are agricultural labourers; literacy level among them is low; and the proportion of people living below the poverty line would be very high among them.[5]

Both the Madigas and the Malas are subjected to social discrimination by upper castes and the suffer social deprivation in general, but between the two, the Malas seem to be better placed in terms of education, employment and political representation. The literacy rate among the Malas was significantly high, nearly double, as compared to the Madigas. One subgroup among the Malas, the Mala dasus, are much better-off. The literacy rate among the Mala dasus was 42.33 per cent in 1981, more than the State average at that time. The community has a considerable number of civil servants, public sector employees (in schools, railways, banks, defence, etc.) and has produced a few entrepreneurs and businessmen at local level. There are also a few political leaders who have emerged from this community at local, State and even national levels. In terms of constitution of self-identity, the Malas regard themselves superior to others within the SCs. The Malas treat the Madigas almost untouchable, as they do not accept food and water from the Madigas. The social unrest among the Madigas can be more meaningfully understood, if we take into account the geographical, historical and political factors that contributed to the raise of dalit consciousness and the unequal development between these two communities.

Talking about the geographical factor, the Malas are concentrated more in the coastal districts, which were under the British rule for nearly two centuries. During the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, the Krishna-Godavari regions experienced immense changes in agriculture, trade, education, mobility of labour force, political orientations and social relations. The villages were drawn into close relation with the towns, which had flourished on trade and processing agricultural produce. As a result, the Malas were among those who had received English education very early, better placed in terms of social awareness, mobility and employment and could take advantages offered by the Church. That could be one reason why the resentment among Madigas against the Malas was more in the coastal region. The Madigas are concentrated more in number in the Telengana region, which remained for centuries under the debilitating feudal Nizam rule, and in Rayalaseema, mostly a dry and backward region for a long time. When the State of Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1958, the population of the Madigas became larger in size, but because of the handicaps imposed by the geographical factor, the lag between the Malas and the Madigas continued.

There is also the occupational factor. The traditional occupations of the Madigas were leather goods work, removal of carcasses from the village, making footwear and drumbeating. Thus they were more integrated into the village life in a subordinate position. The Malas, mostly engaged in weaving and agricultural labour, were not as much a part of the 'patron-client relations' as were the Madigas. The decline of weaving as an occupation forced sections of the Malas to look out for alternative sources of employment during the British rule itself.

There is the politico-historial factor too. The greatest contribution of the British rule in weakening the moribund traditional Brahmanic order and the regeneration of the Indian society was to encourage education among the 'panchamas'. The Government schools were thrown open to all castes even as the Government took special measures to promote education among the 'panchamas'[6]. The Christian Missionaries too played an active role in the spread of education among these communities. The Missionaries gave protection to the untouchables, when they were assaulted, treated them with compassion, and took interest in their welfare.[7] More and more the 'panchamas' got converted to Christianity as the Church instilled in them a sense of self-respect and equality, deprived for ages by the Brahaminical social order, opened avenues to secure education and employment and gave strength as members of a religious community of the rulers.[8]

The growth of social awareness among the dalits had a long history in Andhra Pradesh. The same results of the British rule and agrarian changes that gave birth to the non-Brahman movement of the intermediary Sudra castes, known as Satsudras at that time, also generated resentment among the 'panchamas', as they were known at that time. vis-a-vis the dominant peasant communities in the villages. During the second decade of the 20th century, we find the forming of the horizontal caste solidarities among the 'panchamas'. One manifestation[9] of the growing awareness can be seen in the first Andhra Panchama Mahasabha held at Vijayawada in 1917. The delegates who attended the Mahasabha were uneasy with the term 'panchama' and unanimously declared the Conference as the first Adi-Andhra Mahajana Sabha. The Conference appealed for the provision of schools and drinking water wells in the Mala-Madiga localities, and nomination of Adi-Andhras to local bodies and Provincial legislature. Thereafter the Adi-Andhra conferences were annually held where the Adi-Andhras were exhorted to

address each other respectfully and demands were made for reservation of jobs.[9] Section of the Malas and the Madigas at that time got enumarated during the Census, not as Malas or Madigas but Adi-Andhras. After independence, the Adi-Andhras are treated as a separate caste, although they were mostly members of Madiga and Mala communities and especially the Mala community. The literature of that time reveal the tensions between the dominant castes and the dalits during the 1920s and the 1930s.[10]

During the 1940s and the 1950s the Communist Party organised large sections of the dalits into agricultural labour unions in the struggles for land and wages. In fact, the Communist Party, during that time was known as the Mala-Madiga party in some areas of the coastal Andhra. The new awareness brought about by the Communist Party had a long-lasting impact on these sections, although in terms of political and electoral support, there were shifts among them during the 1960s and after. The Congress could wean away the dalits from the communist influence by offering concessions and support to them. Andhra Pradesh had the distinction of having the first Scheduled Caste Chief Minister of the country in D.Sanjeevaiah (1960-62), who was a Mala.

The reservation policy and other welfare measures provided by the Government in the post-independence period also brought significant changes among the SCs of the State. Education, employment, occupational mobility and political leadership among the SCs, in whatever limited way that was possible, led to the formation of the elites among these communities. This process also brought about a change in the social attitude and thinking patterns among the members of the dalit communities in general.

The last two decades of the 20th century saw a phenomenal rise in the dalit militancy in Andhra Pradesh. The crisis in the theory of Marxism and the collapse of the Socialist States in Europe had cast doubts on the efficacy of revolutionary change based on class struggle. The non-availability of more space for the dalit leadership in the major political parties, the TDP and the Congress due to the limits of the politics of accomodation, made the new aspirants for power among the dalit sections uneasy. The impact of the post-modern world view became evident in the emphasis on autonomous dalit movements and fore-grounding of the ethnic identities.

The events that spurred the dalits struggle were the organised physical attacks against them under the TDP and the Congress regimes during 1985-89. The Dalit Mahasabha was formed in 1985. There was a sudden spurt in the dalit struggles against atrocities; a burst in the creative dalit literature, powerfully expressing the dalit voice and challenging the upper caste dominance; and a flurry of activity to promote self-respect and to forge new solidarities among the dalits. A new corp of leadership, efffectively articulating a counter-ideology has emerged. The new leadership began to say that neither the communists nor the bourgeois parties could really work to end the sufferings of the Dalits. Since the dalits alone can truely represent the dalits, they themselves should fight for their rights, urged the leaders. New hopes were raised among the dalits with the arrival of Kanshi Ram on the Andhra political scene. Several leaders of the Dalit Mahasabha joined the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). So much euphoria was generated and so much the dalit emotions were stirred up that there was speculation as to whether the BSP was becoming a political alternative in the State.

It was this new situation of vigorous assertion of the dalit identity, militant struggles for the protection of the Dalit interests and a forceful claim for political power by the BSP leadership that gave birth to a counter tendency among the dalits in the form of assertion of the Madiga identity and rights. The same logic of identity movements was extended to the problem of the Madigas. That much of the leadership of the Dalit Mahasabha and the BSP came from the Malas became a matter of concern for the Madiga elites. The grand narrative of dalit liberation became suspect, as only a means to perpetuate the dominance of the main elite. They cited that the dalit political parties were under the control of the Malas. The dalit magazines, which were in the hands of the Malas, and the dalit literature did not reflect the aspirations of the Madigas. The distinct identity of the Madigas through out the history was now emphasised.[11] The Dandora leadership pointed out that a hierarchy prevails among the dalits as the Malas treat the Madigas as inferior, that the Malas were trying to establish their hegemony in the garb of dalit unity, and that the Madigas were only getting a raw deal in the process. They demanded an end to the discrimination of the Madigas by the Malas, an end to the Mala dominance among the Scheduled Castes, and a better deal for the Madigas in the welfare benefits and political power.

The Dandora Movement:

In fact, the demand for categorisation of the SC reservations was not new in Andhra Pradesh. Public figures from the Madiga community have been submitting representation to the State Government since 1970s.[12] But the demand now suddenly gripped the imagination of the Madigas, perhaps due to the growth of educated sections among them, the heightened dalit consciousness and also encouragement from the new influential sections of the community.

In its representation submitted to the State Government in March 1996, the Madiga Dandora stated its case some what on the following lines:

> The Madigas are a majority among the Scheduled Caste population of the State. They constitute about 10 percent (66.85 lakhs) of the State's total population. The 15 percent reservations provided to the SCs in the State have been availed only by one caste, the Malas, among the SCs, depriving the remaining 58 castes of what should duly belong to them. Such an anomalous situation has arisen because of the Mala domination and the combined reservations for the SCs.
>
> Much of the governmental expenditure on social welfare is also appropriated by the Malas. The Mala officers conspire to deprive the Madigas of the benefits of the welfare programmes. Thus the houses meant for the SC people constructed by the AP Housing Corporation were mostly in the Mala locatities. Since the Malas occupy all important positions in the SC Corporation, its schemes have been benefiting the Malas only. SC Corporation did not take up any scheme for the development of leather goods workers, who are the Madigas.
>
> The Madigas are not getting proper place in the representative bodies. The Madigas find it extremely difficult to get jobs. The Malas are like priests, closing all the doors to employment to the Madigas. It is virtually impossible for a Madiga to gain entry into government jobs without the condescension of the Mala officers. The Madigas get only the left over crumbs after the malas take their full. The Malas, in the mask of dalit ideology, have been doing injustice to the Madigas. The Madigas suffer from the Mala oppression more than the oppression, inflicted by the upper castes on the Scheduled Castes.

Hence, the SC reservations should be divided into A, B, C, and D groups, on the lines the Backward Castes are categorised in the State. This would enable the Madigas to get what duly belongs to them.

With a view to assert their caste identity, the Madiga leaders began to append their caste titles to their names. The word Madiga, which was earlier used in a belittling sense, became a sign of pride and self-respect. The legendary accounts of the origin of the Madigas and their mythologies were renarrated. Different meanings to the word Madiga were derived, especially the one stressing that they were the great original descendants of the land. They also projected Jagjivan Ram, a chamar by caste which is akin to that of Madiga by traditional occupation, in addition, if not a substitute, to Ambedkar, Statues of Jagjivan Ram were installed by the Dandora activists in different places.

The demand for the categorisation gained momentum within no time. Although the demand was meant to increase access to education and employment, there was good response from the Madigas in general. The Dandora organised rallies at various levels. The 'drumbeat' stirred the deep rooted tensions between the madigas and the malas. The Dandora call became an occasion for ventilating the pent up madiga resentment and the reconstructed madiga identity.

In September 1996, the Government of Andhra Pradesh appointed a Commission of Inquiry, headed by Justice Ramachandra Raju (Rtd), to examine whether a disproportionately large number of benefits have gone to any particular caste among the Scheduled Castes and if so, to indicate steps necessary to ensure that the reservation benefits are equally distributed among various castes in that category. It received representations from different individuals and the SC Associations and gathered information regarding SC employees in the State Government, various departments, local bodies and other relevant institutions.

In its Report submitted to the government in May 1997, the Commission observed that there was disproportionate distribution of reservation benefits in favour of the Malas and Adi-Andhras as compared to their population proportion. It also stated that the Madigas were under-represented both in educational

institutions and public employment. In order to remedy the situation the Commission recommended the categorisation of the SCs into A, B, C and D groups by fixing the reservation quotas in accordance with their population proportions.

The opposition to the categorisation came mainly from the Malas. Some of them have formed a new association for the protection of the Mala interests, The Mala Mahanadu, under the leadership of P.V. Rao, a government employee. For three years the mala campaign against categorisation was carried out under the name of Mala Mahanadu. The criticism of the malas against categorisation was made on the following lines :

> Distinctions among the Scheduled Castes cannot be drawn as all of them are identified on the basis of untouchability. There is nothing like high and low among the dalits. Categorisation of the SC reservations would amount to splitting the most disadvantaged sections of the society. Such a policy would undermine the unity of the dalits. The ruling classes and the upper castes were in a conspiracy to divide the dalits and bring disunity among them. By their demand for categorisation the Madigas were walking into the trap laid by the upper castes.
>
> Instead of fighting for categorisation, all sections of the dalits should unitedly fight for the proper implementation of reservations, for raising the SC quota in accordance with the rise in the SC population and for reservations in the private sector. The subdivision of the quota by castes would only lead to further non-filling of jobs and seats, because the existing reservation quotas are not filled even when all the SCs are treated as one unit. The MRPS was fighting on marginal issues keeping aside core issues.

The Madigas accused the Malas of putting forward the arguments similar to those of the upper castes against reservations for the lower castes in general, such as that they bring disunity among the people and reinforce narrow social identities. The leaders of the MRPS denounced the opposition of Main Mahanadu as 'undemocratic'.

The Government remained firm in going ahead with the categorisation. The Legislative Committee on SC Welfare already recommended the categorisation. The Legislative Assembly passed a unanimous resolution in support of the Dandora demand. The all-party meeting convened by the Government on June 5, 1997 too supported the proposal. The Government immediately issued an order categorising the SCs into four groups A, B, C, and D for the purpose of reservations in education and employment in the State. The Relli group (A) consisted of 12 castes, the Madiga group (B) 18 castes, the mala group (C) 25 castes and the Adi-Andhra group (D) 4 castes. The percentage of reservations was fixed in the ratio of 1:7:6:1 among the four groups.

The MRPS welcomed the G.O., although it was not entirely happy with the Order, since it felt that the G.O. met the demands of the Madigas only halfway. Krishna Madiga, the convener of the MRPS, demanded that the categorisation of reservations should be extended to the social welfare programmes and political representation. The categorisation was limited only to employment and education, it makes little sense to the poor and common madiga people, he said.

The Mala Mahanadu came out openly opposing the G.O. and challenged it in the High Court on the ground that the State Government had no powers under the Constitution to categorise the SCs. It launched a State-wide agitation against the G.O. Rasta rokos were organised and the TDP leaders were gheraoed at different places. The situation came to a flash point, when a full Bench of the High Court, including the Chief Justice, struck down the G.O. on September 18, 1997, on the ground that it was unconsitutional. It said that the Government did not consult the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes before taking the decision to categorise the SCs, which according to it is a Constitutional stipulation for all major policy matters. The High Court rejected the Government's plea that it was in its power to categorise the SC reservations as it did not involve any major policy matter because it did not make any modifications to the list of the SCs.

The High Court's verdict led to another bout of conflict among the Madigas, and the Malas. The ill-feelings between the two communities got aggravated as

the atmosphere became more and more vitiated with physical attacks on both the sides. A Madiga youth was killed in East Godavari district. The MRPS leaders accused the Mala leaders of instigating violence against the Madigas. Both of them organised protest rallies.

Meanwhile, the Government referred the matter to the SC and ST Commission to elicit its advice. The Madigas suspected that the opinion of the Commission would be weighed in favour of the Malas by virtue of their influence. The Madiga leaders were of the view that the Government should issue another G.O. without waiting for the advice of the SC and ST Commission. In the first week of June 1998, Krishna Madiga went on fast unto death and a state-wide agitation was launched in support of his fast. A large number of RTC buses were burnt; the government offices were attacked and fasts unto death were organised in different places; and a few Madiga youth attempted self-immolation to highlight their demand. When the SC and ST Commission advised the State Government against categorisation, it caused frustration and unrest among the madigas.

Bowing to the pressure from the Madiga movement, the State Government prepared an Ordinance on categorisation in October 1998 and sent it for the Governor's assent. But the Governor chose to seek instructions from the President of India, under Article 213 of the Constitution. The draft Ordinance accordingly was sent to the President. Every one waited with great interest for the President's decision, because of the general respect he commanded as a statesman and one who can take a balanced view of the matter and also, perhaps more importantly for some, because of the fact that he himself belonged to a Scheduled Caste. The Madigas and the Government heaved a sigh of relief when the President gave his approval in December 1999 after a good deal of persual of the case for about a year. The decision of the President took much of the steam out of the Mala campaign. Government immediately drafted a new Ordinance on similar lines to that of the earlier G.O. and promulgated it without any further delay.

The Mala Mahanadu vehemently opposed the Government's move. It argued that the approval given by the President for promulgating the Oridnance was not tenable and classification of the SCs was possible only through an amendemnt to the Constituition. The President's action in permitting such a legislation would

lead to several legal complications and open a 'Pandora's box' throughout the country, it warned. Once again the Mala Mahanadu went to the High Court challenging the legality of the Ordinance. After several months of uncertainty, the full Bench of the High Court this time, in its Judgement on November 8, 2000, upheld the Ordinance. While it caused some satisfaction among the Madigas, it led to the renewal of resentment among the Malas, who chose to file an appeal in the Supreme Court.

The manner in which the Madiga leadership sustained the struggle for such a long time, especially in the face of stubborn resistance from the powerful Mala group, was remarkable. One positive aspect of the Madiga movement to be taken note of was that they have come to a stage where they could fight on their own for their rights in such a steadfast manner. Who was there behind them does not really matter, because no such movement can be successful without the encouragment of the forces in power. The Dandora movement might not have achieved its objectives fully, but the confidence it instilled in the Madigas was big enough. One should see the big change in their self-perception, their new found enthusiasm and glow on the face of the Madiga youth during the struggle. For a community which was marginalised and discriminated for ages this was a great success indeed. It may be interesting to note that as a fall out of the Dandora movement demands were made by the Koyas, a relatively backward tribal community of the State, to categorise the Scheduled Tribe reservations on the plea that the joint reservations were taken advantage by some tribes only.[13]

The MRPS demand received very good support from all the major political parties and groups of the State. Reasons could be many and different; a sympathy towards the aspirations of the Madigas for development and better opportunities; electoral calculations as the Madigas constitute a major chunk of the electorate of the State; and a political calculation of undermining the growing militant dalit movement in the State by pitting one major group against the other. The ruling TDP from the beginning backed the Madigas. In fact, there was widespread perception that the Madiga separatist movement was fostered and propped up by the Telugu Desam leadership as part of its efforts to attract the Madiga vote to its side. The Madiga leaders of the Party played an active role in strengthening

the voice of the Dandora. It was often made clear that the MRPS movement had enjoyed the Chief Minister's moral support and encouragement. The Dandora leadership reciprocated it by giving an open call to the Madigas to vote for the TDP in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. On its part, the TDP Government took necessary measures to keep up the momentum of the categorisation process. It even included the problem of the development of the Madiga community in its election manifesto of 1998.

The BJP too extended its total support to the Dandora movement. The Congress was ambivalent during the entire course of the struggle. It abstained from the all-Party meetings convened by the Government. They were afraid not to alienate the Mala support by supporting the Madiga demand, but at the same time did not want to appear falling behind other parties in supporting the categorisation. The Mala Mahanadu openly sided with the Congress in the elections, and its leader, P.V. Rao, became its candidate in the 1999 Assembly election. But at times, the Congress tried to play the game of one-upmanship by accusing the Government of being insincere to the cause of the Madigas. They said that Chandrababu Naidu was only interested in the Madiga votes and not in doing justice to the Madigas.

The left parties and groups, as well as the civil rights associations, were unanimous in their support to the MRPS demand. While they supported the caste solidarity among them, they remained critical of the self-perpetuating caste solidarities. They sought to give a caste-class interpretation to the whole question. Krishna Madiga and Kripakar Madiga, the Convenor and General Secretary of the MRPS respectively, were themselves formerly associated with Naxalite groups and they sought to give a class-caste orientation to the movement. The leftists appealed to the Malas to see the aspirations of the Madigas and gracefully concede their demand for due share in reservations. They also made appeals to the Madigas not to see the issue as merely a struggle against the Malas, not to attribute their backwardness to the oppression of the Malas and become oblivious to the larger caste-class questions. The radical groups in a way stressed the need to transform the caste consciousness of the Madigas into social consciousness (dalit solidarity), and that social consciousness into

class consciousness. Left-minded intellectuals, civil right movement leaders and those who were sympathetic to the dalit cause made appeals to both the communities to reforge unity by putting behind ill-feelings generated during the struggle and desist from mutual attacks against each other.

The increased awareness and organisational consolidation among the two major dalit groups, despite the activation of social animosities and divisions during the struggle, may have long term implications for the State politics. In future, the major political parties may be forced to accommodate this increased assertion of the dalit groups. But, at the same time, it would be premature to imagine that the dalit parties can come to power on thier own. The objectives of the Dandora movement were mainly to improve the socio-economic condition of the Madigas, and was not to capture political power. But at one stage, in June 1997, the leaders of the Dandora declared that they would strive to make Madiga Dandora a third force in the State politics, as an alternative to the Congress and the TDP. That such a possibility was nearly absent became evident when Krishna Madiga took active part in the formation of the Mahajan Front on the eve of 1999 Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. The Front was a loose coalition of 13 parties and groups, mainly splinter groups of the left parties and some dalit and backward castes associations. It could not make much impact either in the election process or in its outcome.

Conclusion

Although the Dandora movement was centered around the demand for a due share in the reservation benefits it could mobilise lakhs of Madigas, whose connection with the benefits of reservations could at best be said very remote, because it could problematise several aspects of the relations between interacting elements of the SC population. The Madiga dandora focusses on the social disparities and the unequal relations among the Scheduled Castes. In the process they tried to reconstruct their own identity, different from the general dalit identity that the Mala leadership tried to create. They had also raised questions about the moral essence of reservation policy, which is to support the development of the ones who are at the bottom

The Madiga movement for self-dignity and due share in the governmental benefits could also be seen as a result of changes due to the democratic processes at work in the country. The impact of change over the years is becoming evident in the assertion of the more backward among the disadvantaged groups. The Madiga movement has shown that in a democratic polity committed to equality and social justice, but operating in a highly stratified society, contradictions cannot be taken up in a sequential manner, taking one contradiction as the principal one at a time. Because of the complexity of the Indian situation, contradictions are simultaneously operating at multiple levels. These cannot be hierarchically arranged by priortising any one relegating others to be resolved at a future date. Should equality make sense to the lowest of the low, these multiple contradictions weighing with each other must be addressed simultaneously and this is what was stressed by the Madiga Dandora.

It is often said that unity grows out of the resolved conflicts, but whether the dalits could reforge unity after all this mutual fight depends on how they would sort out the immediate problem of categorisation and the larger problem of uneasy relations at the societal level. It has been argued, as the Malas did that there would be no end to the logic of reservations within reservations and it would only lead to further fragmentation of the Scheduled Castes. However, the Dandora movement made the Mala leadership to realise that the dialectic of social justice would certainly generate forces within the disadvantaged groups seeking for a better deal and this is a problem that cannot be swept off the agenda. Depending upon different ways of looking at society and interpretation of justice, there could be several answers as to on what terms and in what way a synthesis emerges out of the struggle between the two major interacting elements among the dalits in Andhra Pradesh.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. In recent years in Andhra Pradesh there were demands from more castes for their inclusion in the reserved categories, such as the campaign by the Kapus during the late 1980s, as well as resistance against increasing the reservation quotas, such as the struggle against the increase of backward castes quota from 25 to 44 per cent in 1986.

2. Categorisation of backward castes for reservation purposes came into effect long ago in several states, including Andhra Pradesh. It seems that categorisation of SCs came into existence in Punjab in 1975 without much struggle, where 50 per cent of reservation to the Balmikis and Mahzab sikhs was provided in direct recruitment within the reservation meant for the Scheduled Castes. But the struggle of the Madigas in Andhra Pradesh was first of its kind in India to wage a struggle for categorisation and to raise a plethora of issues in the process.

3. The word 'Dandora', is significant because one of the traditional tasks of the Madigas was drumbeating as in earlier times they were engaged by the local administration for drumbeating in localities to announce official notices and proclamations. It also signified a vociferous advocacy of the madiga cause.

4. According to the 1981 Census from which the caste-wise break up of the SC population is available, there are three Scheduled Castes with population above one lakh, eight castes between one lakh and 20 thousand, 16 castes between 20 and 5 thousand and the rest 32 castes had less than five thousand population. CPI-ML (Jana Shakti, Madiga Reservation Poratam: OKA Pariseelana, in Telugu), (Madiga Reservation Struggle: A Study), Vimochana Publications, Hyderabad, 1996, pp.23-24.

5. It may be of some interest to note that there are no significant differences between the Madigas and the Malas in several respects. The 1981 Census give the following distribution for the working population among the madigas and the malas:

CATEGORY	MADIGAS	MALAS
Agricultural labourers	68.97	67.64
Cultivators	18.05	18.41
Workers engaged in forestry and livestock	1.17	1.10
Manufacturing, processing &other services	11.81	12.85
Living in urban areas	13.37	16.49

Source: Singh. K.S.,(ed), **The Schedules Castes, People of India,** National Series, Vol.II, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, pp.818 & 871.

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10. Lakshminarayana, Unnava, Malapalli, Trivei Publishers, Machilipatnam, 1922; Ranga. N.G., Harijananayakudu, Kisan publications, Guntur, 1933.

11. Writings on these lines were published in Choopu, a bimonthly magazine; also Madiga Choopu, Madiga Choopu publications, Vijayawada. N.D., a new monthly magazine Dandora was launched to report the movement news.

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ROLE OF CASTE ASSOCIATIONS - A CASE STUDY

Dr. I. Ramabrahmam

Mr. E. Venkatesu

According to Nettle (1976), political mobilization is the process by which people in any society are made aware of what they have in common and in what way they are different from others. All societies have to attain a certain level of such mobilization if they are to develop and survive. But the way they do so varies according to their culture, their history and their goals[1] (Nettle J.P.: 1976).

1.1 Caste Association : Review of Selected Studies

Hardgrave, in a study on Nadar's (or Shanars as they are formerly known) in Tamil Nadu (Rajni Kothari, 1986), stated that there are three stages through which political mobilization of Nadars (counterparts of Gouds in Andhra) can be explained. These include (a) parochial, integrated and differentiated cultures[2]. Similarly, MSA Rao esplained the political mobilization of Ezhavas in Kerala, while broadly agreeing with Hardgrave's observations located the issue of Ezhavas backwardness in relative deprivation[3]. Rajni Kothari stated that caste is one of the multiple identities of plural societies like India. Political and social mobilization on the basis of caste, Kothari opined, would strengthen the base of democracy. These groups facilitate putting a pressure on the system for a better share. Further, Kothari felt that such political mobilization on caste basis legitimizes the political accomodation.

Rudolph & Rudolph, in an authoritative work entitled, the Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India[4] (1979) covered a wide canvas and indicated the nature of changes that caste associations have brought about. They characterized the part played by caste associations as para communities. They viewed caste associations as democratic reincarnation of castes. These caste associations, according to them, represent the adaptive response of castes in social, economic and political changes. These well known political scientists felt that in pursuit of objectives of social mobility, political power and economic advancement, caste associations contribute to fundamental structural and cultural change by providing and adaptive institution in which traditional and modern

features can meet and fuse (Rudolph & Rudolf: 1979). Similarly, Verma (1989), in a study of Kurmi Caste Association in U.P., noted that the major objective of caste associations is expressed through the organizations of district, state and national level conferences (Sabhas), which strive hard to enhance the social status and prestige of castes as a whole in the traditional hierarchy of the society. Caste associations subsequently changes their agenda to include goal of social transformation. He graphically presented how Kurmis (shepard community) evolved a supra local, supra ethnic network. Verma also studied the relationship between traditional leadership and modern leadership.

Kurmis established the educational institutions, which helped their caste people to take up modern professions. It is reported that the Kurmi members are turning towards secular and modern values (Verma, 1989). Kurmis are demanding more educational/job facilities[5]. Regardless of this new trend favouring modernization, the caste endogamy remained unshaken. It is, by now, a well-established reality that the new born class-consiousness is based on competition for economic opportunities and share in power. Indian political structure enabled them to exert political pressure in solving their problems. Participation of the political elites provided leadership to the caste meetings. Caste association, Verma observed, is not a representative political institution. It does not directly involve itself. Politicization of Sabha was usually expressed as a means rather than as an end in itself and whatever was emphasized was for the achievement the of welfare aims of the caste. However, there are certain limitations for these political mobilization efforts. It is stated that not all constituent groups get integrated into the umbrella Caste Association. Moreover, not all politicians belonging to the caste take active interest. Political elites belong to different ideologies but are also divided into factional groups. Nevertheless, caste associations' interest sometimes override political party interests. Again, at times, caste loyalities transcend political parties and legislators. Political elite of a single caste may cooperate in their efforts for a common purpose[6].

Other studies, though not academic, noted that there is just a ceremonial commitment to the cause of a caste association. Every time the association holds a conclave (Maha Sabha every year) and resolutions are passed. There is little follow-up. In spite of it, the caste conclaves discharge an important role in linking tradition and modernity. Through their integrative mechanism, they

combine instrumental and expressive functions. Surveyers of the major Sabhas vindicate the changing role of caste associations. While the desire for community's upliftment remains a major item on their agendas, they communicate that sacred thread has no meaning. It was economic and political achievement that matters. Politics is an important instrument for bringing advancement of their communities in particular and BCs in general. Thus, the Sabhas of caste associations' conferences, to an extent, succeed in amalgamations of diverse castes by hyper and hypogamous affiliations and provide us an insight as to how umbrella caste associations might be deparochialized to a certain degree to include various castes which have distinct entities. This is what is known as the process of fusion.

This paper attempts to study the process of political mobilization adopted by the Gouds in Andhra Pradesh for changing their socio-ecnomic status and for "a rightful space" in accomodation in the democratic politics.

Constituting about 1/8th of total population, the Gouds are categorized as one of the Backward Classes. These marginalized sections are the victims of continuous exploitation by the State as also other infuential sections of society[7]. This paper especially tries to understand the pattern of their response to the exploitative politics. Besides, it also reviews the welfare policies and programmes introduced by the post-independence government. How their caste association facilitated the political mobilization of this group is specifically examined.

1.2 Emergence of Gouds: An Ethnographic Perspective

There are three distinct caste-based organizations, which are working for the welfare of the Gouds. These are (1) Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tappers and Workers Federation (PATTWFA), which came into existence in 1950s politically nurtured by CPI; (2) Council for the protection of the Rights of Toddy Tapping Professional and Industrialists (CPTTPI), with the backing of Swatantra Party & Krishikarlok Party in 1950s; (3) Goud Officials and Professionals Associations (GOPA) in 1980s. Recorded history of Gouds' suggests that a powerful band of Gouds attacked the Golkonda Fort led by Saivaj papanna Goud in 18th century itself. In the IVth Volume of Subaltern History edited by Ranjit Guha, it was

mentioned that Toddy Tappers revolted against Chigurupannu and Modalupannu imposed by the colonial government in the northern Coastal districts of Andhra in 19th century[8]. As an occupational caste group in Andhra pradesh Toddy Tappers have different caste names such as Ediga, Gouda, Srisaina, Settibalija, Yatha, etc. in the State. Demographically, they constitute about six percent of the total polpulation of Andhra Pradesh. According to Hardrave, "the toddy tappers were forbidden to enter into Hindu temples. Within the social organization, there are several restrictions on their movement. For instance, according to the observers, water from wells cannot be accessed. In some places, they were denied the right to carry even an umbrella or wear shoes, gold ornaments, draw milk from cows or walk in certain streets, and women of their castes are not expected to cover their upper bodies. Indeed, a tapper could not even approach a Brahmnin within twenty four paces[2]" (Rajni Kothari: 1986)[9].

1.3 Place of the Gouds in the Social Hierarchy

The tappers lived in a social structure located somewhere between the Sudras and the outcastes or the untouchables. The tappers are the largest group among the backwards. They occupy the lowest place along middle caste ladder. They have been described as "poor, but are not paupers. known to be rude and unlettered, yet, by many degrees, removed from a savage stage[10]". In thier oppressive routine, the majority of toddy tappers, climbed as many as forty trees twice in a day during the six month season, extracted toddy, which would then be made into jaggery/sugar or different forms of desserts.The tappers are concentrated predominally in the Telangana region especially in the districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Medak, Nizambad, Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, Ranga Reddy and Warangal. It is likely that they migrated at an early date from the Telegana region to other parts of Andhra[11]. In other parts of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, they are scattered in a single villages. They took the brunt of their communities social disablities. They were forced to reside outside the village itself in a street and were refused service of the barbers and washermen. Economically dependant on the owners of the trees, the tappers climbed the palmyra trees during the tapping season and worked as agricultural labourers during the rest of the year[12].

It must be mentioned that even in places where they are large in number, their condition is worse than their counterparts of the two other regions. They serve the landed families. Individual surveys reveal that their condition remains unchanged over the years. The Communist Party has been making intensive efforts to politically sensitize and mobilize them. In the mid-twentieth century, a 'mass movement' which brought into its fold. A good number of toddy tappers in this region primarily fought against the Nizam's feudal domination and the colonial rule in Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Perhaps, this is the reason why still an overwhelming majority of toddy tappers continue to support the Communist Parties, especially in the Telangana region[13]. They saw the Communist Parties as their protector, and in that they perceived the possibilities for economic change and advancement. Increasingly, with the support of the Communist Parties, the tappers could secure at least some benefits. Further, though their economic position had not greatly improved, the ideology of the Communist Party had given the tappers a ray of hope for improvement from their sufferings under the dominance of the landlords during the Nizam rule. Despite economic subservience, the tappers appear to have found a new unity through the organization of the Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tappers and Workers' Federation (APTTWF) and Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tapping Professionals and Industrialists Association (APTTPIA). Further, education appears to have enabled the rise of the toddy tappers into business classes. It gave them a sense of economic independence. Laying of roads and other communication facilities appear to have broken-down the barriers of spatial distance, which had divided the communities and the increasing interaction within the caste over a wide geographic area evaded the distinction between the endogamous sub-castes into which the community had been divided. This, incidentally, also paved the way for the formation of caste associations for political mobilization.

II

With the formation of Andhra Pradesh, Toddy Tappers and Workers' Association and Council for the Protection of the Toddy Tapping Professionals and Industrialists began resisting the phase of the exploitative excise policies of the colonial government in the old Madras Presidency and the Nizam's Government[14].

2. Excise Policies : Evolution

The Madras Presidency adopted different policies for administering the excise revenue, which can be discussed in three different phases:

2.1. The Monopoly Phase

During this phase, the colonial government's real interest was in exploring as many areas of extraction of revenue as possible. An important feature of this phase was that no basic changes were introduced either in administration, transport and communication, method of agricultural or industrial production or with regard to the tapping of toddy by the colonial regime. The nominal changes introduced were meant to facilitate efficient collection of revenue. Needless to say that British rule was not very different from the ancient Indian empires or kingdoms, which concentrated on revenue collection alone.

2.2. The Commercial Phase (1864-1905)

The commercial phase began with the implementation of the recommendations made by the 1884 Excise Committee appointed to examine and to revamp the excise administration of the Presidency and it is through this report that the Act of 1886 was enacted and the Madras free trade policy came into vogue.

2.3. The Phase of Reduction of Indigenous liquor (1905-1947)

The emergence of the middle classes, who imbibed the culture and values of the West added another dimension to the issue. Used to the foreign liquor, the patronage to traditional Indian liquor declined. Caplitalizing on this, the govenment appointed the Excise Committee of 1905-06 to look into the excise administration and to see the possibilities of taking advantage of this new habit. It looks as though the Committee was appointed to discourage drinking of the traditional liquor. The second was high taxation to discourage illicit brewing. It was suggested to continue the auction system till a more efficient system was evolved.

However, the toddy policies, which were introduced by the Nizam in the Hyderabad State, were different from those implemented by the colonial government.

The Nazarana from 1730 to 1894.

Nazarana was collected from the toddy tappers. Shops were auctioned at the will and pleasure of the bureaucracy concerned.

The Contract Phase: Owing to the defects and drawbacks in the Nazarana, the Governement decided that the Abkari be awarded on contract from 1895.

The Awani Phase: In 1936, the contracr system was abandoned in favour of the Awani system. Under this system, the manufacture of liquor and toddy was carried out under the supervision of the department and only the right of retail sale was auctioned annually. According to this policy, the hereditary excise rights were abolished.

3. Introduction of the Auction System

On examination of the excise policies pursued by the regimes, one cannot miss certain similarities. The first was the auctioning (Harraj) of the toddy selling or trading to the highest bidder. The second similarity was the emphasis on maximum extraction (revenue) from the toddy without any expenditure on the part of the enforcing agencies. The third one was the unabated suffering due to the continuation of the excise policies, even in the post-independence period. The fourth was the controlled flow of the illicit liquor. And finaly was the phenomenal increase in the rent-seeking behaviour of the Excise staff.

The Colonial and the Nizam's excise policies left the toddy tappers underdeveloped, backward, underprivileged agricultural labourers. The policies were formulated in a manner through which the rulers, the Zamindars, the Jagirdars, the landlords, the contractors and the excise staff got unduly enriched at the cost of an ordinary tapper. Eventhough the rulers and the policies had been subjected to constant review, the position of the poor toddy tappers had remained unchanged even today in the rural areas[15]. They had a highly impoverished,

miserable, helpless and low standard of life. The roots of political mobilization of the deprived tappers can, therefore, be seen in the exploitative policies pursued by the colonial state.

The movement of the toddy tappers can be explained in two dimensions: (a) to liberate them from the exploitation of the feudal domination and age-old colonial and Nizam policies by massive mobilization, and (b) the incremental approach, i.e., to improve their low economic status and accomodate them in power-sharing gradually.

An attempt is made to study these two in regard to the mobilization aspect of the movement and the political accommodation. It calls for presenting the genesis, growth, and internal dynamics of the movement and the institutional response to such processes.

The earlier part of this paper, referring to the position of the toddy tappers in the Colonial Madras Presidency and the Nizam's region, contain information as to how, through different policies they were exploited. Meanwhile, as a reponse to their pilght, leadership emerged, which articulated the conditions and worked for greater politicization of the community and spearheaded the movement focussing on the issues.

4. Formation of the Caste Association: The Gouda Sangham

Free India created an atmosphere for the mobilization of toddy tappers. They reacted to their oppressive conditions by forming an association based on caste identity first in Telangana. The formation of the Gouda Sangham is especially noteworthy in this period. Formed in 1955 in the Hyderabad State with the toddy tappers of Nalgonda, Khammam, Warangal, Karimnagar, it soon speared into Andhra (i.e., in the districts of West Godavari, East Godavari, Krishna). The Andhra Toddy Tappers and Workers' Federation actively worked during the same period[16]. Initially, there was not much of interaction among the caste associations of Andhra and Telangana. Soon after independence, the toddy tappers transcended their caste identity and felt the need to organize more on the issue of the rights of the toddy tappers to begin with and then on thier caste solidarity. The euphoria

of the radical left movement in Telangana and the nationalist movement in the Madras Presidency further added to the consolidation of the political organization of the leadership irrespective of the party affiliations. All those who felt victimized joined together setting aside their regional and ideological stances.

5. Resistance to the Mobilization Moves

It must, however, be stated in this context that there was resistance to the moves for mobilization from power brokers and contractors within the Gouda community for a state level organization, as they perceived it a threat to their control and leadership[17] then. Despite this, the leaders belonging to the Telangana and Andhra attended a meeting in 1956 in Hyderabad, in which two significant decisions were taken. Firstly, it was decided to unite the two regional associations of toddy tappers of Telangana and Andhra and secondly, it was decided to hold the first state level conference of the newly constituted Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tappers and Workers' Federation at Garla in the Khammam district in 1957[18]. The main objective of the meeting was to sensitise the toddy tappers, who laboured the whole day about the deplorable work conditions and coordinate the activities in the State through formation of a central committee.

Not much of elaboration is required to underscore that the economic demands contributed for the effective mobilization of the taddy tappers. The first state level conference, held in 1957 at Khammam, set the agenda phase. It came out with specific demands, including the abolition of auction system, group auctioning of societies, sanctioning of toddy shops to villages, lifting of prohibition, land patta, educational facilities to the kin of the toddy tappers, and the publication of the excise laws.

A parallel development at the same time deserves mention here. Under the leadership of Sardar Goutha Latchanna, an organization called "Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Toddy Tapping Professionals and Industrialists" came into existence. Following the strategy of petition, the Council ventilated the grievances of its members with a mandate to help its entrepreneurial class. The members of this group belong to the creamy layer of the toddy tappers.

6. Response of the State Cooperatives for the Toddy Tappers

The State responded to the demands by establishing seven Toddy Tappers' Cooperatives in many districts in 1957. Over the years, the number increased. According to the Annual Report of the Department of Excise & Prohibition, 1999, the number reached 7044. However, the membership in these co-operatives was captured by influential and rich sections thereby defeating the very purpose of setting up of such societies.

Meanwhile, the Associations realized that the cooperatives, set up by the State for the welfare of the Goudas, were actually hijacked by those who had nexus between the bureaucrats, excise officials and politicians. So, struggle by the association continued.

7. The Second State Level Mobilization

The Second State Level Conference of the Toddy Tappers was held in Suryapet in 1975[19]. The Conference demanded the abolition of the age-old *Harraj* system (i.e.,auctioning of societies). The Conference further requested the State to implement (a) Tree for Tapper Scheme, (b) Welfare Measures, (c) Ex-gratia for those who fell down from the trees.

Moreover, the other major issues, which were articulated at the meeting, crystallized into a list of programmes. Thus, the year 1976-77 was declared the year of struggle for the abolition of the *Harraj system*. They demanded that loans be given to the cooperative societies through the nationalized banks by the Central and the State governments. They also proposed the establishment of the finance corporation to develop the toddy industry; the withdrawl of the 5% increase in the annual rent; introduction of the single rent instead of three types of taxes, extending it to the Workmen Act to the tappers, abolition of the Mahipuj (reservation of the trees); bringing the changes in the Abkari Act, according to the changed needs and so on. The Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tappers and Workers Fedetation mobilized more than ten thousand tappers to march to the Assembly

in the traditional costumes on 29th July 1976. The interesting aspect was that it was held during the time of National Emergency[20]. They gave memorandum to the then govenment highlighting their demands.

8. Political Mobilization: National Level Formation of All India Toddy Tappers and Workers Federation

Dissatisfied with the response from the State of A.P. and agitated over the proposal of the Janata Government in the late 1970s for the introduction of the Total Prohibition in the country, the then leadership organized a national level conference-the All India Toddy Tappers & Workers Federation. The main objectives of this all-India body were (i) providing the employment oppurtunities, (ii) old-age pension, (iii) maternity allowance to women workers, (iv) provident fund and insurance coverage, (v) ex-gratia to those involved in accidents, (vi) a separate machinery for regulating and implementing the programmes and their welfare measures. Meanwhile, the Janata Government could not enforce total prohibition.

As a part of its ongoing struggle for achieving the long-pending demands, the All-India Association organized a Second Conference in 1988 in Hyderabad. The demands were a kind of repetition, which included a proper legislation for the welfare of the tappers, pension and provident fund schemes, scholarships for the students of the tappers' family. More specifically, since Government of Andhra Pradesh, it was observed, was collecting huge revenue from toddy as rentals each year, and hence there arose a demand for setting up of a finance corporation with an allocation of Rs.20 crores out of the total amount thus raised. Further, they demanded that a single point tax be introduced instead of three types of rentals[21].

9. Political Compulsions Behind Abolition of *Harraj*

The Government of Andhra Pradesh finally abolished the Harraj system bowing down to the pressure from the caste Associations.

Political compulsions than welfare of toddy tappers appear to have prompted the Congress-I in A.P. to abolish the *Harraj System*. Realizing the strong base for the TDP-left combine among the toddy tappers, the Congress-I in A.P. tried to

wean away considerable number of Gouds from their hold by abolition of *Harraj* system in 1993. Ironically, congres-I could not take political advantage out of such abolition in Andhra Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the agitation for reintroduction of prohibition gained momentum in Nellore district in 1993. The Vijayabhaskar Reddy Government, keeping the electoral politics in view, reintroduced total prohibition including toddy (exempting, of course, the IMFL). The TDP, which was in opposition then, took note of the agitations launched by the A.P. Toddy Tappers' Association and declared in its election manifesto that it would continue total prohibition, including IMFL, but would exempt toddy[22].

The left parties, in general, supported the exemption of toddy. The anti-arrack movement leader too saw the merit in exempting toddy from the prohibition policy package. The occupational nature of toddy tapping was the chief reason cited by various political parties, caste associations and other organizations. The TDP, which subsequetly swept assembly polls in 1993-94, won maximum number of assembly constituencies with the active political support of toddy tappers.

The TDP, as a political strategy since 1995, has been continuing its political patronage of the toddy tappers. The following decisions reflect this trend. The strategy is to nurture its political constituency:

(a) Hike in the ex-gratia;

(b) Bringing all sub-castes of the toddy tappers community under an umbrella caste called, GOUD through an executive order;

(c) Allocation of five acres of land to the tappers to grow the trees.

Although the above decisions met the long pending demands, the main problems facing the Goud community are yet to be addressed to. These include (a) the bogus membership in the cooperative societies, (b) the problems of three levels of taxation to the landlord for having a tree in his/her land; for drawing and selling of the toddy to the government besides the payment of "Mamools", (c) shift of the subject of toddy from the control of the excise department to that the department of cooperation.

The efforts of mobilization led to the unification of the tappers all over the State and the formation of the local, district and State Level committees. The changed policies brought the transformation in the socio-economic and the political conditions of the tappers. The community of toddy tappers utilized every space for articulating their demands. Initially, they began with highlighting issues of extreme forms of exploitation. Soon it had evolved to demand asking for institutional support and mechanism such as (1) toddy tappers cooperative societies, (2) tree for tapper, (3) abolition of the Harraj, etc. Thus, the voice of the toddy tappers and their mobilization found expression in terms of institutional response. In the process of working out the institutions thus provided, there were bound to be certain loopholes and limitations. The institutions were captured by the more well-to-do. Yet, a new set of demands emerged to correct the given framework. There was in this process a combination of revenue extraction of the government while at the same time a process for recommending welfare measures. Thus, the revenue extraction was done with a "human face". The scanty welfare policies were a result of or an outcome in response to pressure and mobilization built up by caste association. The network from district to state and an all India level have become vehicles for a social as well as political mobilization.

A large mass of the poor and exploited toddy tappers joined the struggles for assertion of their rights. At the same time, there has been an internal mobility and differentiation within the members of the community. There is also an emergence of the educated middle class among the toddy tappers' community who are competent and capable, and have been able to increase bargaining power within political system. Some have become contractors and businessmen playing a crucial role in social and political mobilization and also succeeded in climbing the ladder in electoral politics, while keeping their social base through caste association.

10. Emergence of a Middle Class among the Gouds: GOPA

Realizing the need for competent and professional manpower, they articulated a demand for a forum. Therefore, the Gouds promoted an organization christened as GOPA: as Gouda Official and Professional Association. Operating from the State capital, Hyderabad, the GOPA now has a membership of nearly

3000, including three High Court Judges, around 1000 doctors, 1000 lawyers, quite a few academicians, including professors[23]. Among the members include some civil servants (IAS/IPS). However, its objectives include promotion of the cause of Gouds bringing together all those belonging to different professions and occupations. Its chief aim, according to the General Secreatary of GOPA, is to arrange alliances, social gatherings. offer gold medals to meritorious students, and arrange face-to-face with members of the group. According to reports, it is acting as a pressure group for certain benefits like transfers, postings, reinstatements of the dismissed Goud employees on corruption charges, bargaining for lucrative postings, contracts, etc.

11. Political Parties vis-a-vis the Gouda Caste Groups

While the GOPA confined itself as a social organisation of the white collared Gouds, the two other caste organizations, i.e., Council for the Protection of the Rights of Toddy Tapping Professionals and Industrialsts, and A.P. Toddy Tappers and Workers' Federation continued to act as lobbies and pressure groups for the achievement of larger economic interests. The conscientious drive launched by them led to social and political consciousness and mobilization among the otherwise scattered community.

Political parties too vied with each other in wooing the electoral segments of the toddy tappers by informally promising ministerial berths, seats in the Panchayats, State Assembly and Union Parliament, and also promises of solving their long-pending demands.

Instruments for Political Mobilization

The two caste based associations are widely known as the principal agencies, which promoted the rights of the toddy tappers through circulation of pamphlets, booklets, publication of speeches, launching agitations, including dharnas, and organization of public meetings. The objective was to build a solid vote bank. Welfare appears to be secondary. The oppressive and exploitative excise laws enacted during the Nizam and Colonial State constitute the core issue, which is apparently admitted by all parties around which all sections of

toddy tappers are mobilized. According to the observers, the relentless struggle for relief from the oppressive excise regime led to only incremental relief to the clientele group. It may be realised here that the first step in this relaxation of the oppressive excise regime can be seen in the permission given for setting up the cooperatives in the 1950s. Subsequenty in 1970s, the government of Andhra Pradesh, realizing the monopolistic tendencies, noticed in the cooperatives, came out with a policy of alloting tree for a tapper. Now, the toddy tappers were given freedom to set up selling points.

However, the auction system of cooperative societies, i.e., Harraj, is continued until 1993. The toddy tappers got mobilized and fought against this policy of encouraging only politically influential and monied. After the abolition of Harraj system, the space for entrepreneurial class among the caste members got enlarged. Because of this policy, the total number of cooperatives of toddy tappers got more than doubled. It is reported that the income accruing out of the toddy too increased phenomenally.

12. The Current Status

Having consolidated their economic hold and having forged powerful political linkages, the principal caste associations of the Gouds appears to have gained considerably. A study of political recruitment of the Gouds shows a gradual rise in their representation. Out of 1150 Mandal Prajaparishads, the Gouds occupied 1/5th of the positions. The TDP introduced reservations for the BCs in the local bodies conceding to the demands made by the macro Backward Classes Associations, which pushed up thier representation. However, when it comes to the representation of the Gouds in the Assembly, there are only nine MLAs and in Union Parliament, there is only one MP. The number may not be in relation to the numerical strength of Gouds of all sub-castes.

The political regime since independence allowed the moilbization of the toddy tappers, who organized themselves to press for relief and by raising specific issues and demands. The government responded to these pressures and introduced welfare policies, which are mostly incremental, aimed at appeasing mainly the influential. Thus, while it continued to depend on excise as a major source of revenue, it did this with the so-called 'human face'. However, it must be

noticed that unlike in the pre-independence phase, the government did not just plunder. It had set up cooperative societies and also introduced policies, which integrated the toddy tappers into the process of production and distribution. The base of the toddy tappers, who could utilize these benefits widened. The existence of the autonomous and independant political organizations of the toddy tappers generated a powerful political consciousness among them to become the active participants in the ongoing political process. The electoral politics of the post-independant era had also contributed to the growing significance of toddy tappers as an important electoral base. The leaders, who emerged heavily, banked on the social base for their political survival in the electoral politics. This fact was very well recognized by the toddy tappers as they aspired to become the representatives of the people. Some of them occupied ministerial positions.

Fifty Years of Movement : A Survey

In the fifity years of history of the post-independence period, the toddy tappers' movement had brought in some change in thier socio-economic conditions. More than any thing else, new institutions have been created which facilitated the formation of political clouts. Yet, when compared with the economic, political and cultural positions of the toddy tappers in TamilNadu, Kerala and Karnataka, the toddy tappers of A.P. are backward, especially in terms of education levels. In the other Sates, they had concentrated on the social and cultural reforms and recognized the importance of the education even before independence. The self-respect movement and the policies pursued for upward mobility were the central concerns of the SNDP movement in Kerala and the Nadars movement in Tamil Nadu. Such a powerful reform movement did not emerge in Andhra. Perhaps, this may not be the reason why the toddy tappers in A.P. are lagging behind. Further, analysis can be attempted only with the help of a comprehensive ethnographic study in all the Southern States.

The Goud Associations are now demanding that the impact of globalization and liberalization be neutralized by having reservations in the private organizations also. The gradual withdrawal of the State signalled shrinkage of the employment oppurtunities, questioning the rationale behind such reservations. The Gouds Associations are now focussing on the removal of three types of taxes and

introduction of single mode of taxation; removal of bogus members and allotment of land and allocation of at least 10% from the total revenue accruing out of taxes on toddy for the welfare function.

However, the entry of the MNCs in the liquor trade might lead to a shift in the consumption habits. The fast pace of urbanization is removing the toddy tappers from the production process. Despite, achieving scanty economic gains, a large majority of Gouds like other OBCs in Andhra Pradesh are pessimistic and are suffering with a sense of disappointment, which is an obstacle for political mobilization. The hopelessness and worthlessness often felt by a majority of the Gouds was effectively articulated by Narayanaguru and Nadars, who argued that the only solution is to give up their traditional occupations and opt for occupational mobility. This appears to be only an alternative left to the Gouds in Andhra Pradesh.

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CASTE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE REDDYS IN ANDHRA*

Dr. B. Sanjiva Reddy

Introduction:

Caste associations are very old in the Country. One is not sure of the chronological details pertaining to caste organizations and associations and their origin. Castes have not come into being in any particular year or evolved on any particular basis. They are the result of changes and developments which took place in time and space.

The Reddys of Andhra:

There have been innumerable studies on caste by the sociologists, anthropolists, political scientists not only from India but also by the foreign scholars. As an instrument of social stratification of social and political mobilization and of politicisation, caste has attracted the attention of many scholars in the modern times. The enquiries into the pervasive nature of the caste system had resulted in arriving and identifying at certain characteristics of the system such as dominance and dependance, political mobilization resulting in the emergence of vote banks etc. However, caste as an instrument of socio-economic development has not received the attention it requires.

Castes are the localised social groups with definite characteristics of'nativity. As such, different regions in India present with distinct caste groups which are specific to that particular region. Among them one may find certain castes exercising dominance over other caste groups and be what M.N. Srinivas's considered as dominant castes. It is these castes which have out grown the narrow confines of vote bank politics and focussing attention on the socio-economic development of their caste people. Two dominant castes among a few caste groups in Andhra Pradesh at present are the Reddys and Kammas. This paper attempts to focus on the Reddys in the State of Andhra Pradesh and seeks to understand the role played by them in the social, economic and educational development of the members of their caste groups.

The Reddys in the State of Andhra Pradesh are well spread over all places namely Telangana, Andhra and Rayalaseema. They inhabit extensively in the 700 mandals of the total 1104 mandals of the State. They have also spread in the neighbouring States of Karnataka, The Reddys are divided into two groups and are known as Reddys and Okkaligas. The Okkaliga names are suffixed with the word Gouds but they do not have any similarity with the Gouds of Andhra Pradesh who are toddy tappers by profession, whereas the Okkaligas are an agricultural community. The Reddys of Karnataka constitute 6 percent of the total population of the state.

In Tamil Nadu, the Reddys do not add the suffix Reddy to their names. However, in the caste, and death certificates they mention their last name as Reddy i.e., Reddiar. One finds Reddy castes spread over in the States of Kerala, Pondicherry and Andaman and Nicobar islands also as a result of migration from the boarder areas of Andhra Pradesh.

The Reddy caste is divided into 30 sub-castes or Sakhas. The community like any of other caste group in the State is not free from internal differences, and. there was no social mobility among the various Sakhas in the past.

Socio-Economic Development: The Origins:

It was at the Guntur District that the Reddy Jana Maha Sabha was held on 29th November, 1931 under the chairmanship of Kola Keshava Reddy; who in his inaugural address, spoke extensively about the inter-rivalry within the Reddy community. He observed that the inter-caste differences are the foundation for the destruction of the community and questioned how a community cound expect to progress in such circumstances. He also said that there was a need to spread education to bring progress to the community and even stressed the importance of women's education which was the need of the hour to develop progressive outlook among the members of the community. Since educational facilities were available only in the urban areas, there was a need to provide infrastructural support to spread education. it is necessary to establish hostels in the urban areas to fulfil the objectives of education for all within the community. We have to concentrate on providing hostel facilities at the urban level and to achieve this we have to forget our inter group rivalry and donate liberally to the cause.

However, the credit for the development of the Reddy community has to be attributed to the early efforts of one great visionary namely, Savai Raja Rameshwar Rao Bhairi Balavanthu Maha Bhoopal of the Wanaparthy Samasthanam who lived between 1820 and 1868. He was a great social reformer and his vision had no boundaries of region or religion. He was english educated in the Christian Missionaries at Madras. He was fluent in English, Parsi and Urdu. The Raja brought together seven Reddy boys and got them educated in English, Parsi and Urdu and later got them jobs. He established a school in Wanaparthi later in which English, Parsi and Urdu were taught to the Reddy students. After his death, his wife Pravai Rani Shankaramma shouldered the responsibility to fulfil her late husband's wishes. Maharaja Rameshwar Rao Bahadur-II, the son of late Raja Rameshwar Rao-I, had not only continued to provide free education but also established a big library at Wanaparthy. He was instrumental in publishing rare and old collections into books and also published many Sanskrit books. it was in 15-6-1325 fasli that Smt.Rani Janamma, the younger daughter of Srimahu Maharaja Rameshwar Rao Bahadur was married to Raja Sheelam Rama Lingabahadhur. It was in such a relaxed atmosphere that there was a discussion among the Reddy elite present, who introspected on the fate and lack of Education in the community. The Raja of Wanaparthy was gracious and agreed to help in establishing the hostel at Hyderabad but was worried about the day to day running of the hostel. He was also wondering, if there was any one who would shoulder the responsibility of managing the hostel. Raja Venkat Ram Reddy Bahadur, assured the Raja that he was ready to take up the assignment, if the funding was taken care of. Later, the Raja Bahadur became the Founder-Secretary of the Reddy Hostel at Hyderabad. Immediately there was a spate of donations. It was with the donations that the Reddy Hostel was started in the year 1918. This was a new begining in the history of the Reddy Community.

In 1918, the first Reddy hostel meeting was held at Hyderabad. The Reddy hostel was started in a rented accomodation which led to a lot of problems resulting in expediting the efforts to build a permanent building. It was in 1924 that the present building at Hanuman Tekdi in Abids was acquired for Rs.50,000/- and was inaugurated on 4th September, 1925 by Raja Fathenvaju Panth Rai Muralidhar.

Reddy Jana Sangha:

THE GENESIS: The Reddy Jana Sangha was formed in the year 1920 at the initiative and appeal made to the community by the Raja Saheb of Munagala N. Venkat Ranga Rao and C.R. Reddy. Sir C.R. Reddy presided over the two Provincial Reddy Conferences held in the years 1917 and 1920 at Nellore and obtained the permission to start the Reddy Jana Sangha at Chennapatnam.

THE OBJECTIVES OF REDDY JANA SANGHA: The Reddy Jana Sangha was formed to achieve the twin objectives of (a) Integrating the different sects within the Reddy community through inter-sect marriage, (b) educational upliftment of the Reddy Community.

According to Konda Laxmi Kantha Reddy, Secretary, Reddy Jana Sangha who in the annual report (93-96), says that the objectives of the Reddy Jana Sangha were to spread the glory of Reddys world-wide and help the economically backward people of the community and, that like any other caste association the Reddy Jana Sangha was also interested in the well being of the Reddy Community.

Reddy Jana Sangha which was formed in 1920, got impetus at the Second Reddy Mahasabha which was held in Kurnool in the year 1921.

REDDY JANA MAHASABHAS: To bring a qualitative change in the lives of the Reddys and among all the sections of the Reddy population- the prominent members of Reddy Jana Sangha organised 11 Reddy Jana Mahasabhas till date. The objectives of the Reddy Jana Mahasabhas were to examine, understand and meet the requirements of the community. The first Reddy Jana Mahasabha was held in Cuddalore in the year 1913 under the chairmanship of Rajabahadhur Agram Subbarayulu Reddiar who later became the Chief Minister of the Madras State. It was organised as a District conference, but was attended by the members of the Reddy community from other areas. The Second Reddy Jana Maha Sabha was held in November 1916 under the Chairmanship of Kadapa Koti Reddy, and Kusam Bapi Reddy acted as the Chairman of the reception committee. Prominent Reddys of Nambur (Devagiri Subba Reddy) Nellore (Kalam Reddy), Kurnool (Narayana Reddy and Mysura Reddy) were the men behind the conference.

PERMANENT SOCIETY: The third conference was held in June 1917 under the Chairmanship of Raja Venkata Ranga Rao Reddy Bahadur, the Raja of Munagala. The then Zamindar of Buchi Reddypalem, Dodla Venkat Rama Reddy, was the Chairman of the reception committee. It was at this conference, that the idea of having a permanent society for the uplift of the Reddy community was first mooted by the Raja of Munagala in the course of his presidential remarks. It was dicided to collect grants and donations from the rich Reddys and to give scholarships to the poor Reddy students. This meeting was regarded as the foundation for the uplift of the Reddy community.

THE VISION: The Fourth Reddy Jana Maha Sabha was held in 1920 under the Chairmanship of Sir C.R. Reddy, a distinguished educationalist and Rao Bahadur A. Subba Reddy, a retired Deputy Superintendent of Police was the Chairman of the reception committee. Though there was no idea to establish Reddy Jana Sangha earlier, it was only at this meeting that a concrete shape was given to the idea. It was Sir C.R. Reddy who expressed his ideas as to how and in what shape the Reddy Jana Sangha should emerge and surge ahead. He also appealed that the members of the community should be able to collect Rs.10 lakhs as permanent fund to the Sangha.

The fifth Reddy Jana Mahasabha was Chaired by Kadapa Koti Reddy at Anaparthi in East Godavari District which was held in 1920. Dwarampudi Rama Reddy was the Chairman of the reception committee and notable among them was Mallidi Sathi Reddy, the editor of 'Reddy Rani' a periodical. Later, the sixth Reddy Jana Mahasabha was held in December 1920, in Mandanapalle under the Chairmanship of Sir C.R. Reddy and the Chairman of the reception committee was T.N. Narayana Reddy. The Seventh Reddy Jana MahaSabha was held in December, 1921 under the Chairmanship of Raja of Wanaparthy Krishna Deva Rao. C.V. Ranga Reddy was the Chairman of the reception committee. It was here that Raja donated a sum of Rs. 50,000, and the interest accrued was to be spent on providing scholarships to the poor Reddy students. Mrs. Annapoornamma, daughter of Subba Reddy, a resident of Nellore, who was the first woman graduate (B.A.) was honoured with a gold medal, and later she went on to do her M.A. and is said to be the first woman post-graduate from the Reddy Community.

The Eighth and Ninth Reddy Jana Mahasabha were held in 1925 and 1929 at Madras and Cuddapah respectively. On 19th December, 1925, the eighth Reddy Mahasabha was inaugurated by Sir. C.R. Reddy with V.C. Narasimha Reddy of Chittor as Chairman. The conference was well attended by the Reddys of Madras, Mysore and the Nizam's State. The Reddy Jana Sangha went into hibernation for the next four years and there was no collection of funds, nor was there membership drive. The Ninth Reddy Mahasabha was held in Cuddapah in the year 1929 under the Chairmanship of Bahadhur Sathi Venkat Reddy and Kadipikoto Reddy was the Chairman of the reception committee. Prominent among the members present were Sir C.R. Reddy and B. Ramachandra Reddy. Again, in 1931, June 20th and 21st the Tenth Reddy Jana Mahasabha was held at Anantapur. It was to be held under the Chairmanship of Madras Lagislative Assembly Speaker Bejawada Ramachandra Reddy but due to his illness, Minister for Education of Madras State, Kumara Swami Reddy, had to preside over the Reddy Jana Mahasabha. G. Laxma Reddy, the then Board president of the Ananthapur District, was the Chairman of the reception committee. B. Ramachandra Reddy's address which was read in absentia, lamented that the Rs.10 lakhs which was proposed to be collected a decade back as a permanent fund was yet to be realised. He appealed to all the members of the community to come forward and donate generously to educate the poor and deserving youth of Reddy Community.

The great Economic Depression had its impact on the Reddy community which was dependent on agriculture. The community members showed little enthusiasm towards the Sangha and its activities. The consequence was the Sangha had gone into a long hibernation of 8 years. To bring activity back to the Sangha, the Eleventh Mahasabha was held in 1939 at Madras. The "Wanaparthy Palace", the Palace of Raja Wanaparthy was the venue of the conference. Bejawada Ramachandra Reddy was the Chairman and E.V. Sundar Reddy was the Chairman of the reception committee. Much later the Reddy Jana Mahasabha was conducted in the North Arcot district of Thiruvannamalai, which was chaired by B. Ranga Swamy Reddy. There is no definte proof of the late Reddy Jana Mahasabhas which were conducted. But the foundations for the welfare of Reddy Community and the measures and strategies to bring education nearer to all the sections of the Reddy community can be traced to the efforts of the eleven

Reddy Jana Mahasabhas which were conducted in the past. The Reddy community which was basically agricultural community realized the importance of education and made plans to achieve this goal as early as 1920. The Reddy community articulated its interets through the Reddy Jana Mahasabha. To quote Sir C.R.Reddy, "The future of the Sangha depends on the quality of education given to the members of the community. The Sangha is not only trying to educate all sections within the community but was also trying to bring about unity between the various sects of the Reddy community by virtue of marriage. It is a fact that the rich Reddys are squandering money over legal disputes and litigation and on celebrations of marriages-but have not come forward to donate liberally to the Sangha. Till date we been able to collect Rs.48,480.13 and out of which Rs.2400 is the lone contribution of the Maha Raja of Wanaparthy. It is sad that we have cherished 10 lakhs". He strongly appealed to the members of the community to donate liberally. The Raja Bahadhur Venkata Raghava Reddy appealed to the parents to provide the children with basic education and if they had money to be liberal with it and also appealed that even girls be given equal attention in their education. At the Tenth Reddy Jana Mahasabha, Guthi Laxmi Reddy, District Board President of Ananthapur who was the Chairman of the reception committee had appealed thus: "It is insulting to note that we have not many qualified members in our community, after all it is we who had given life to many arts in the past. It is important that we contribute generously to the building of the infrastructure needed to educate our students. Our women have no education and it is serious and shameful mistake which has to be set right. We not only should organise Reddy Jana mahasabhas at the state level, but, we must also have an exclusive Reddy Educational Fund, to help the needy Reddy students. We also must establish hostels, exclusively for Reddys wherein the poor students are given free boarding which will help in propogating education in the community at a very fast pace".

A close look at the conferences held reveals the following facts:

The early period, i.e., upto 1920, it can be safely said as the period in which the seeds of Reddy Jana Sangha were sown which bore fruit only in 1920 i.e., interest aggregation of the Reddy Community started in real earnest and with lots of hope and zeal.

The Nellore Conference (1920) and Kurnool Conference (1921) reflects the efforts at integration and enthusiasm of the community to articulate its interests.

The Madras Conference (1925) the Cuddapah Conference (1929) the Anantpur Conference (1931) and the Madras Conference (1939) put all their efforts to motivate and at reviving the Reddy Jana Sangha and to bring an attitudinal change in the community and also to rekindle the declining interest in the progress of the Sangha. However, it may be added that such attempts were not very fruitful.

The other Conferences, though organised by the local enthusiasts, did not attract sufficiently large and representative gatherings, either capable of intensifying and extending the activities of the Sangha or of adding substantially to the permanent fund of the Sangha or to the annual income in the shape of endowments for scholarships.

Establishment of Reddy Hostel: The rapid changes taking place in the world with the end of the First World War and the spirit of national movement sweeping the country had a profound impact on the Reddy community.

The Reddy Community, possessing vast amounts of land showed hardly any interest in other activities, more so in the field of education. They were content with life as they had enough to maintain themselves, Another, reason for their lack of interest in education was that higher education was absent at the village level where they lived. As higher educational facilities were available only in large cities, the students of the Reddy Community could not pursue eduacation, as it was beyond the reach of the most members of the community.

Those who could afford to go to cities for education found it extremely difficult to continue their studies. This was because, the few Reddy students, who were then studying in Madras, had the difficulty of finding suitable hostels where they could get the sort of food to which they had been accustomed. And they were also scattered all over the city that it was not easy for them to come into frequent contact with one another.

The Reddy community realized the need for a hostel to accomodate the students of the community, which would facilitate and help the members to

pursue higher studies. They also felt ".... a hostel of their own for better food, better accomodation and better social understanding between themselves". it was these circumstances which led to the establishment of the first ever Hostel for the Community.

The first hostel for the Reddy students was established in 1907 and the credit goes to Mr.K. Koti Reddy's initiative. The hostel was christened as "Kondaveedu" at the instance of Sir. C.R. Reddy, after the capital of the old Reddy Kingdom and had, for their emblem, a sword and a plough, to represent the former glory of the Reddies as warriors and rulers and their present occupation as peaceful cultivators.

In 1917, the hostel 'Kondaveedu' was dissolved as it was felt that there was no need for a separate hostel for the students of the community, but, it was revived again in 1920, as per the objectives of the Reddy Jana Sangha which had come into existence by then. "Kondaveedu" continued to function for next six years, i.e., till 1926 but was closed as it was felt... 'undesirable' that the Reddy students should live in isolation and not come into contact with the students of other communities.

The hostel which was established, with one of the objectives of bringing better social understanding between the Reddy community was closed on the premise that it was 'undesireabe' for the Reddy students to live in isolation without interacting with students of other communities.

The above feelings of the Reddy elite continue to influence the Raja Bahadhur Venkata Rama Reddy Hostel which is in Hyderabad. As a policy, the Reddy Hostel, reserves 15 percent of its seats to the students of other communities. This is to bridge the intra-community gap which is necessary in the modern times. The objective, with which 'Kondaveedu', was closed as elucidated, manifested itself as a policy in the functioning of Reddy hostel.

The Donations pledged by the elite of the Reddy community present at the wedding of Rani Janamma totalled Rs.83,735, However, only Rs.58,675 were actually realised. It was with these funds that the Hostel established in 1918. The Hostel, however, did not make much progress till 1920.

In 1920, the hostel was established in a rented building at Jambagh, in Hyderabad with 5 students. Three of the students belonged to Naidu community. That these were only two students from the Reddy community mirrors the educational backwardness of the community at that point of time. It is important to note that the founders of the Hostel had no parochial interests in the Reddy community and were magnanimous towards all the students, irrespective of caste. This practice of admitting students from different communities continues till date. The policy to admit students from different castes has brought in donations to the Hostel from prominent philonthropists of different communities.

The Reddy Hostel which was started with the objective of promoting education for the members of the Reddy community and to help the poor students of the community, appears to have failed in the objective, atleast in the early beginings. The Hostel fee of Rs.20 was astronomical by the standards of the day. Also, the lavish elitist life style of the Reddy community seems to have rubbed off on the hostelites and this is reflected in the appointment of a barber, washerman and shoemaker who were all in the service of the boarders of the hostel. Apart from this, there was a moulvi to teach urdu and Parsi, a teacher to teach English and a drill master to take care of physical education.

Sumptuous food was served to the boarders. The daily meal consisted of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Meat was served for dinner. Every friday there was to be feast where they were served sumptous food. The atmosphere was totally elitist because most of the students were from the elitist Reddy families of the day.

It was at this juncture, Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy became the Joint Secretary of the Reddy Hostel in the year 1922, and was appalled at the state of affairs of the hostel. He realised that the elitist nature of the hostel was prohibiting even the middle class Reddy caste students from pursuing their studies.

He thus mooted the idea of 'second class boarders'. His efforts went in vain till 1923. Finally it was decided to have second class boarders on a payment of Rs.12 as fees, which the management agreed on the condition that there will be atleast 25 such boarders. As it was not possible for all the 25 students joining

at one go, Mr. Reddy accomodated the students in his own house for a period of three months before the required strength of 25 was fulfilled and later admitted them in the Hostel.

The strength of the hostel which was only 60 in the first 6 years however had shot-up to 149 by the year 1930. This is largely attributed to the efforts of Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy and the policy of second class boarders which he advocated. By 1928 the policy of first class boarders was abolished.

However, the system of first and second class boarders was introduced again in 1346 fasli to accommodate more number of poor students. The fee charged was Rs.12.50 for I class and Rs.7.00 for II class boarders. Since, the dining hall was separate for both the classes of boarders it was felt that the arrangement was harmful to the students unity and this system was done away with in the year 1359 fasli.

The credit to a large extent should go to Raja Bahadhur Venkatarama Reddy O.B.E., and his untiring efforts and wisdom which made reddy hostel what it is today. Raja Bahadhur was born in a peasant family of modest means on Mahabubnagar District in Andhra Pradesh.

The Raja started his career as a Police Amin and went on to become the Kotwal (Commissioner of Police) of Hyderabad city. Coming as he did from the rural background, he was always concerned with the problems of the education of the non-urban youth.

As the Founder-Secretary of the Reddy Hostel, he is considered as the architect of educational renaissance of the rural Telangana. Through his personnel efforts, he raised contributions worth Rs.3 Lakhs and put the Reddy Hostel on a firm footings which helped thousands of young men from rural areas to purchase their studies.

Raja Bahadhur was a man with a vision and took part in multifarious activities. As a member of the State Legislative Council (it was by virtue of his position as Kotwal, he was also a member of the State Legislative Council), he was responsible for enacting laws against the exploitation of the children for

domestic labour, against child marriages; and for the remarriage of the widows. He was an influential presonality in the Hindu society of Telangana and encouraged the eligible and competent Hindu boys to go abroad for higher education which was then considered a taboo.

Raja Bahadhur denounced the practice of untouchability and was actively associated with the running of Orphanages, lepper homes, and homes for the aged. He helped in organising a women's club at Hyderabad, known as 'cosmopolitan Club'.

As the first President of the Girls High School, Narayanaguda, he is considered as a pioneer in women's education through Telugu Medium. In starting a Girls High School in telugu Medium. he had to confront the authorities, who refused to recognise the school. He did not give in but got it affiliated to karwe Institute, Poona.

It was this man, with rare vision and courage who was actively involved with the Reddy hostel. In fact, it was Raja Bahadhur who suggested the idea of establishing the Hostel to the elite of the Reddy Community present at the wedding of the daughter of Raja Rameshwara Rao Bahadhur of Wanaparthy on 15-7-1325 Fasli. Raja Bahadhur took a keen interest right from the beginning of the Hostel and was associated with all the activities of the Hostel. The students fondly called the Raja Bahadhur as Thatha-Grand-pa.

Scholarships:

One of the objectives of the Reddy Hostel was to give scholarships to the poor students of the Reddy commuinity. In the seven long years of the establishment i.e., by 1332 Fasli, only three students belonging to Reddy Community were given scholarships. The amount given away as scholarship was Rs.60 initially, and had reached a sum of Rs.1000 per month by the time of celebrating the Golden Jubilee in the year 1972.

Liberal donations from the various samsthanams helped in giving scholarships to the deserving and needy students of the Reddy Community. But, with police action and the abolition of Zamindari and the merger of Samsthanams

there was a severe financial crunch. The monthly donations from the various samsthanams dwindled and slowly stopped which resulted in the stoppage of scholarships to the poor students. To overcome the financial crunch which deprived the poor and deserving students to pursue their studies, the management of the Reddy Hostel searched for alternatives. To this end, the management built a new building in the year 1954 at a cost of Rs.1,02,000 and rented out 12 shops in the ground floor and created accomodation for 100 students on the top floors.

Library:

The boarders of the Hostel made attempts to establish a library as early as 1329 Fasil and to meet this end collected even building material for the construction of the building along with books. In 1929, a building to house the library and a reading room was constructed at a cost of Rs.49,000 which was inaugurated by Maharaj Sir Kishen Pershad the then Prime Minister of the Hyderabad State. By 1972 the library had 13,840 books which included rare books and encyclopedias. The library is considered as one of the best in the city of Hyderabad.

The Boarders of the Hostel donated Rs.3,93,000/- in the Platinum Jubilee period year of 1996 towards the expansion and additions of books to the library.

Reddy Yuvajana Sangham:

To achieve all round development of the students in the hostel, they were encouraged to play sports and games. However, the Young Men Reddy Association (Reddy Yuvajana Sangham) which was established in the year 1329 Fasli was open for membership to outsiders and instrumental in playing a very active and important role in the Hostel partaking the activities like sports, drama, debating and physical exercises.

The Reddy Yuvajana Sangham organised guest lecturers in the Hostel by experts and prominent people to enlighten the students of the community. The Sangham also took the help of experts in the field of sports to teach the Hostel wards.

Reddy Bagh - A Participatory Approach:

Since most of the students were from rural-land owing peasant gentry, it was thought that it would be helpful to the students of the community if they were trained in agricultural nuances. To fulfil this objective, the management of the Hostel bought 7 acres of farmland on the out-skirts of Hyderabad. The farm which was ideally located at the downstream of Hussainsagar, was to be the training field to the boarders of the hostel. Even a dairy farm was added to the farm and all the Boarders were to go and work on the farm on every holiday and all the vegetables and milk produces were used in the hostel mess. However, it is surprising to note that the farm had to be sold because the boarders showed little interest in the farming activity. Also, the farm was becoming a liability in terms of finances to management. The effort of the management to train the students in modern agricultural methods failed.

Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy Academy:

The Raja Bahadhur Venkata Rama Reddy Academy was started in the year 1995-96 with the objective of training candidates from the disadvantaged sections of the community from rural areas who appear for various civil services examinations. The Academy not only train students for civil services examinations but also taken up coaching programmes for entrance examination for admission to various post-graduate and professional courses.

Reddy Girls Hostel: The Reddy Girls Hostel was established in Hyderabad on 21.10.1342 Fasli to provide accomodation to the girls of the Reddy community coming from rural areas in pursuit of higher studies. The Hostel was started on the initiative of Raja Bahadhur Venkata Rama Reddy. The Raja Bahadhur was not satisfied with the starting of Reddy Boys Hostel alone. He firmly believed that the progress of the Reddy community would be possible when women of the communities are also educated. However, there were no institutional arrangement for girls to pursue higher education at that point of time. It was by Raja Bahadhur's efforts that the Girls Hostel was established in Hyderabad in a rented accomodation with only 3 boarders and in a few months the strength of the Hostel went upto 25 boarders. Later Raja Bahadhur collected

donations and saw to it that a new building was constructed exclusively for girls in the city which has grown into one of the very few largest Women's Hostels in the city at present.

The efforts of the elites of the Reddy community, the Reddy Jana Sangha have left indelible impressions on the Reddy Community. But for the efforts of the forefathers of the Reddy community in the twentieth century, the community would not have made the progress in which it thrives today. The community as a whole should be greatly indebted to the founding fathers of these institutions.

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VYSYAS AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS IN ANDHRA PRADESH

PURUSHASUKTA refers to the Brahman, Rajanya, Vysya and Sudra forming the face, hands, thighs and legs of PURUSHA. Later, these four came to be the four VARNAS - Brahman, Kshatriya, Vysya and Sudra, the first three together being considered DWIJAS, the twice-born, eligible for UPANAYANA, i.e. the ceremony of wearing of YAGNOPAVITA, the sacred thread, and for study of Vedas.

In late 19th Century, there were attempts to start associations to bring together the castes that supposedly had somethings in common but were known by different names in different parts of India. One among them was the Vysyas. All India Vysya Federation in May, 1993, at its Meerut Conference brought out a Souvenir in Hindi entitled "VYSYS EKTA SATABDI SAMARAH" (Centennial Celebration of Unity of Vysyas) implying that efforts to bring about unity among the Vysyas in India had been going on from 1893 onwards. Komatis/Vysyas in the Telugu speaking areas in the Madras Presidency and the Princely States of Hyderabad and Mysore do not seem to have been influenced by such efforts at unity. According to the Directory (1999-2001), the Vysyas in India are known by about 80 different names. But the worship of Kanyaka Parameswari seems to be limited to the Telugu speaking Komatis/Vysyas/Arya Vysyas. An estimate of the population of the Vysyas may be useful in this context.

ANDHRA PRADESH VYSYA POPULATION IN DIFFERENT DISTRICTS IN 1921 CENSUS

District	Population of Vysyas	Total Population of Districts	Percentage of Col.2 to Col.3
1	2	3	4
Agency	6317	1496358	0.42
Ganjam	33633	1835562	1.83

Vizagapatnam	39316	2231874	1.76
Godavari	28507	1470863	1.94
Krishna	76198	2133314	3.57
Guntur	67465	1809574	3.73
Nellore	38979 +11957	1385553	3.68
Cuddapah	24759	887929	2.79
Kurnool	38280	914890	4.18
Bellary	7048 +7102	862370	1.64
Anantapur	21733	955917	2.27
Chittoor	20736	1209157	1.71
Banaganapalle	1419	36692	3.87
Andhra Area	4,23,449	1,72,300.53	2.46
Hyderabad City	6146	404187	1.52
Atraf & Balda	13539	497498	2.72
Warangal	28716	925041	3.10
Karimnagar	28287	1095244	2.58
Adilabad	11148	655536	1.70
Medak	21485	642796	3.34
Nizamabad	19459	499765	3.89
Mahaboobnagar	20253	750730	2.70
Nalgonda	33149	940301	3.53
Telangana area	182182	6411298	2.84
Total	605631	23641351	2.56

The Komatis - the present Arya Vysyas - consider themselves the descendants of the couples of 102 gotras as immorated themselves. Vasavi Kanya came to be worshipped as Kanyaka Parameswari by Vysyas. Temples have been built for her in hundreds of places where she is worshipped. The Vysyas like other Hindus visit Hindu Temples also.

ARYA VYSYA MAHASABHA - in MADRAS PRESIDENCY

Public spirited citizens of Madras established the Madras Native Association in 1854 and the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884. The inauguration of the Indian National Congress in December, 1885 and the founding of the National Social Conference in 1887 as a result of the success of the Congress heralded great political and social changes in India. From 1892 onwards holding district conferences to discuss issues of interest in economic and social matters became common in Telegu-speaking districts in Madras Presidency. Probably the inspiration for the Vysyas to establish South India Vysya Sangam in Madras on May 5, 1905 and the holding of the first Arya Vysya Maha Sabha conference later in Guntur came from these district, and social and caste conferences.

The first Arya Vysya Mahasabha (AYMS) was held in Guntur in 1907[3]. Information is not available about the various factors and immediate circumstances that led to the holding of the conference or details about the various resolutions passed at that conference or the successive conferences. The Arya Vysyas were concentrated primarily in the Telegu-speaking districts of Madras Presidency and so many of their conferences in later years were also held in these districts. (The conditions in the erstwhile Hyderabad State-the Nizam's Dominions-of which Telangana, the Telegu-speaking districts, formed a part were not conductive for public activity. This is discussed later in this note). The credit for organising the Conference goes to Sanagapalli Ramaswamy Gupta, who was himself quite active, in the activities of the Indian National Congress.

The matters discussed and the resolutions passed in the Conferences were related to the improvement of the Community. Some of these were issues like sea travel, post-puberty marriages and widow-remarriages-which the Brahman reform leaders like Kandukuri Veerasalingam had to contend with in the second half of the ninteenth century.

In the conference at Madras (1911) there was serious discussion on whether sea travel was permitted by Sastras or not. The next conference at Kumbakonam (1912) resolved that sea travel was not prohibited by the Shastras[4].

In the conference at Visakhapatnam (1921) resolutions in favour of Postpuberty marriages and widow remarriages were adopted but the conference in Guntur (1924), attended by about 1800 delegates, condemned and rescinded the Visakhapatnam resolution. At the conference at Salem (1927) presided by Tumpudi Bhagavantham Gupta, then a Deputy Collector, efforts were successfully made for passing resolutions in favour of post-puberty marriages and widow remarriages which were earlier negatived at Guntur (1924).

Vysya Women did not lag much behind their men in organising themselves. Along with the sixth conference of the AYMS, held in Madras in 1911 a Vysya Mahila Sabha was also held. Next year its second conferences was held in Kumbakonam alongwith the AYMS in 1912.

The growth of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha and its affiliated wings is reflected in the composition of the Central Committee of the Mahasabha. The members of the Arya-Vysya Maha sabha Central Committee for 1949-50, according to its annual reports for that year comprised of (1) representatives from the different districts of Madras province and also from areas like Pondicherry, Pudukkottai, Orissa and the Nizam's Dominion, representatives of its different wings namely (2) Arya Vysya Mahila Maha Sabha, Arya Vysya Yuvajana Mahasabha, Kavi Pandita Parishad, Arya Výsya Vyayama Mandali and the Southern India Vysya Association, ex-president of Arya Vysya Mahasabha, Patrons, Vice-Patron, President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Secretaries, Treasurer and the Auditor.

Education Fund :

At the Arya Vysya Youth Conference held in Anakapalli on 10th November, 1947 there was only one resolution-and that was passed unanimously[5]. It was to start an institution for providing financial help to Vysya students studying technical subjects like Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture etc. It came to be known as Provincial Vysya Education Fund. It was decided to grant REPAYABLE

Scholarships to poor and deserving students recommend atleast by two members of the Fund, paying an annual subscription of not less than Rs25/-. The Scholarship amounts were made repayable as and when recipients began to earn, at not more than $12^1/_2$% of their income, only after their income exceeds Rs.200/- a month. The fund covered the students from the whole of Southern India. i.e., Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Mysore States and occasionally from Bombay state. Around 1972, the objectives of the fund were enlarged to include 'commerce' in the definition of 'Technical Subjects'. Till the end of the year 1975, Scholarship were given to 358 students, upto 5 years, 78 being Medical, 103 Engineering, 92 Polytechnics, 4 Commerce, 9 Agriculture and the rest for other subjects such as Textiles, Geology, and Television. The beneficiaries who fully repaid the scholarship loans given to them, numbered 245. From around 1973 the Institution was granting matching grants upto Rs.25,000/- a year for construction of hostels for Vysya boys in places, where there were none till then., and also the Institutions which helped Vysya Technical students with Scholarship on repayable system.

The Institution was also awarding Gold Medals to Arya Vysya Students who secured the highest average marks in Ist Class in Professional courses and non-repayable Merit Scholarships for prosecuting post-graduate professional courses.

Arya Vysya Officials and Professional's Association : (AWOPA)

The Arya Vysya Officials and Professionals Association (AVOPA) had its birth in Madras in 1955[6]. At the instance of Sri.K.R. Krishnaiah Chetty, the then Judicial member, Income Tax Appellate Tribunal and at Hyderabad in 1957 with the initiative of Shri N.R. Balaswami Gupta to bring together all officials and Professionals with the following chief objectives and ideals:

1. To work and strive for the well being of the members.
2. To promote close contact between members with a view to foster esprit-De Corps among them.
3. To advise and help members to equip themselves for discharging official duties efficiently; and

4. To advise, guide and help youth of Arya Vysya Community in the choice of careers, to strive for spread of education and uplift in general of the Arya Vysya Community.
5. Helping to secure employment to the prospective youngsters.
6. Running a matrimonial bureau to render service in arranging suitable allinaces.
7. Providing accomodation in AVOPA guest house located near the main bus depot in gowliguda area in Hyderabad city at nominal service charges to the persons coming to twin cities.
8. Assisting persons interested in starting self-employment schemes.
9. Programming to start a cultural wing to encourage amateur artists amongst the members and their familities by forming sub committee to look into them.

The AVOPA functions at different places in Andhra Pradesh.

Nizam State Arya Visya Maha Sabha

The situation in the State of Hyderabad was quite different. There was no freedom of speech or expression or press freedom. There was not even scope for education in mother tongue. For middle school education i.e., 6th, 7th and 8th Standards, one had to go to the District headquarters or the state capital. There were hardly half a dozen graduates among the Vysyas. All the oppurtunities were enjoyed by the Muslims, who constituted just about 15% of the total population but belonged to the faith of the Nizams.

A Vysya Mahasabha was functioining in the Princely State of Mysore by 1911. At the Arya Vysya Mahasabha Conference held in Bellary in 1915, the Vysyas of Nizams Dominions, by an application, requested that they should have a separate organizations for themselves[7]. It was about two decades later that steps in the direction of organising the Vysyas in Nizam's Dominions were taken up.

In 1936, Nagothu Venkata Krishna Rao, a student of Law felt that efforts should be made to bring all the Vysyas together. He consulted some prominent

Vysyas of the city of Hyderabad. On the advice of Madapati Hanumantha Rao, a Brahman leading the Andhra movement in the Hyderabad state, he set up an organisation on september, 1936 to rouse the Community consciousness among the Vysyas in Hyderabad. He organised monthly meetings in different localities where Vysyas were in substantial number, exhorting them to get organised. Alongwith his friends Labhisetty Linganna, and Bijjala Veeraiah, he toured the different areas-Telangana, Marathwada and Karnataka Districts in Hyderabad State for this purpose.

The first Nizam state Arya Vysya Mahasabha was successfully organised on a grand scale under the presidentship of Dandu Pentayya on February 12th and 13th, 1938 in Hyderabad. Alongwith it, a Vysya Mahila Sabha (Women's Conference) was also organised. The Sabha resolved to rouse the consciousness among the Vyayas and to establish a Vysya Hostel in Hyderabad.

The resolution noted below were passed at this first conference. They show that the Vysyas were most concerned with the improvement of their conditions particularly in matters of education. They also concerned themselves with social reform, and also in matters relating to encourage native industries and Khaddar[8].

Resulutions of the First Nizam Rashtra Arya Vysya Mahasabha

Proceedings of any meeting of the Vysya should begin with Prayers to Sri Kanyaka Parameswari.

Serious efforts should be made to improve educational facilities to Vysyas, to establish a Vysya Hostel at Hyderabad, scholarship and prizes to Vysya students, boys and girls and to extend these facilities to districts.

Improvement of Women's education.

Establishment of schools in every locality for Vysya students and teaching of Sanskrit along with Telugu.

To improve trade, establishment of Vysya Association in each and every village.

Establishment of Vysya Vyayama Sanghams.

Performance of Upanayanam for Vysya boys before the age of 12 years.

Performance of all religious functions as prescribed by the Vedas.

Girls should not be married before 11 years.

Males above 45 years should not be allowed to marry.

In matters of trade and commerce, the officials are harassing the Vysyas inspite of clear instructions from the government. The government was requested to look into the matter.

Vysyas should avoid unnecessary expenditure on religious functions and should economise.

Vysyas should use only Rishi gotras.

It is proper for the Vysysas to enter the sanctum, sanctorum and personally perform the pooja for the temples of Kanyaka Parameswari, steps should be taken to enable this.

25% of the income from Kanyaka Parameswari temples should be used for the improvement of the eduaction of Vysyas and the rest for expenditure for temples.

The large proportion of the receipts by way of Dharmam-Charity collected during trade, should be spent upon improvement of education and welfare of Vysyas.

Contributions to Vysya institutions should be offered whenever Vysyas perform religious functions in their houses.

Establishment of a Vysya Bank.

Unity among the Vysyas.

Congratulations to running the Journals 'Vasavi', Bharatiya Vysya and Deccan Vysya.

It is the duty of each Vysya to help the unemployed Vysyas.

Establishment of Libraries in all villages.

Vysyas should as far as possible use khaddar and products made in India.

It is the duty of the Vysyas to honour social workers, poets, pandits, educationalists and artists of the Community.

The Govenment was requested to ban Vysya VEDOKTA KRIYA VICHARA VYAVASTHA as Sringeri Peethadipathi had not taken any action till then.

The government was requested to provide opportunities in high offices- as there was no Vysya in them.

The criticism that traders are doing injustice to agriculturists was rebutted as agriculture is the traditional occupation of Vysyas.

The resolutions passed at the women's conference were as follows[9]:

Polygamy should be avoided, no one should give their girls in marriage to one who, already had a wife.

Prohibition of child marriages.

Request for ending the dowry system.

Spending less on religious functions and utilising the amount thus saved for education.

No nuptials before 16 years for girls.

Women also should do physical exercises.

Widow remarriages should be agreed to.

Women should use cloths and products made in India.

Insurance with native insurance companies.

In every district atleast one girl should be taught in Gurukul.

In the Satyagraha of 1938 against the Nizam sponsored by Congress, Hindu Mahasabha and Arya samaj, 22 Vysya Youth participated and went to Jails. After their release, they felt it necessary to work for the community, to spread political consciousnes among them and to work for their development fearlessly. The elders of the community at that time had no interest in politics. There was no organisation or leadership then to make use of youth power.

Akhila Bharat Vysya Yuvajana Sangh was sponsored by K.C. Gupta a freedom fighter, On 20th April, 1939., at Hyderabad. The main object[10] was to create interest in politics and encourage them to participate in the development activities of the nation along with other citizens of the country, and to do research and to publish books on ancient and modern Vysyas in India. Unlike other associations it did not set up any subsidiary branches in villages, towns, or districts in the state.

Vysya youth also participated in Hyderabad Freedom Struggle in 1942 and 1946. They wanted to publish a regular journal intended to keep the community enlightened the government a number of times for necessary permission. The request was granted only 20 years later i.e., only after Nizam ceased to be an independant ruler. Thus people could not represent their grievances even through the print media during the rule of the Nizam till the accession of Hyderabad to the Indian Union.

Vysya Yuvajana Sangh submitted a Memorandum to the Nizam's Government in 1946 requesting for a grant of one lakh of rupees and ten thousand sq.yds., of land for a Vysya Hostel in Hyderabad from the funds of extra profit tax collected from the Vysyas (Merchants) during the war time. It also requested that the laws prohibiting the purchase and mortgage of agriculture lands etc. which were against the interest of Vysya-be cancelled.

It gave a call to Vysyas to boycott and not to participate in the reforms proposed by the Nizam. During the second world war it appealed to the Vysyas to join the Army and defend the Country. It introfuced the publications of bulletin system and the first bulletin was published in the State in 1946. The Yuvajana Sangh was instrumental in sponsoring or helping to sponsor many institutions.

After the Satyagraha and the struggle, a conference was held on 17.8.1946 under the chairmanship of Bachhu Venkateswara Gupta. In 1947 India became independant. Nizam's rule came to an end in 1948. Hyderabad became a part-B state. For about 7 years, there was not much activity for the Sangh. A conference was held in Hyderabad in December, 1954 and later in Nalgonda in 1956. The Arya Vysya Mahasabha favoured the integration of Telangana and the Andhra state and submitted a Memorandum to that effect, not only on cultural grounds but also on considerations, such as that the combined State, would be in a position to economice on the expenditure on maintenence of the capital of the state, that the Krishna and Godavari waters could best be utilised for the benefit of the people, that the Tax payers in Telangana needed an immediate relief from the heavy burden imposed on them and that as all the economic resources have to be directed for the development of communications and the expansion of educational and medical facilities, a separate Telangana state would mean perpectuation or pauperisation of Telangana[11].

With the formation of Andhra Pradesh on November 2, 1956, the name of the organization changes to Andhra Pradesh, Arya Vysya Maha Sabha. The first conference under this banner was held in December, 1956 in Warangal. Important years like Silver Jubilee and Golden Jubilee have been celebrated as special occasions.

Vysya Organisations After 1956

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh, the Vysyas became quite active. New organisations in different fields to serve the Vysya at the State and National level have come up. A number of educational, charitable and such other institutions managed by Vysyas have been established in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. Political activities have been given due attention. The Arya Vysya Mahasabha has been strengthened particularly from the period in which Konigeti Rosayya was the President (1975 & 76). (In later years he became a cabinet minister in Congress Government in the State). Units of the organisation were set up at different levels from village upwards. He organised the conference of the

Maha Sabha in Vijayawada in January, 1977, in which about 2 lakhs of vysyas participated. Due importance has been given to politics without losing sight of the need for the solidarity of the community. The emphasis continues to be on improving the educational and economic status of the members of the community through a spirit of service and self-help by underlining the primary role and responsibility of the community towards its less-endowed members.

VASAVI DIRECTORY (1966) published by Arya Vysya Maha Sabha, Hyderabad, provides district wise information of activities of Arya Vysya Sanghams.

A bird's eye view of the different institutions that have come up, and the activities undertaken to further the interests of the community, presented in the following pages is based on these and other publications.

VASAVI CLUB: Set up in 1961 in Hyderabad, it has been doing Yoemen services to the different sections of society in numerous ways. By 1994, it had about 1331 members.

VYSYA GRADUATES ASSOCIATION: Starting of Vysya Graduates Association (VGA) on 19th May, 1974 is another step by the Akhila Bharateeya Vysya Yuvajana Sangh. Among the other things (VGA) strives for the welfare of the members in all spheres of life.

On 26th January, 1976, Vasavi Homeo Clinic, a free dispensary for all was inaugurated. Another service activity of VGA is the Vysya Graduate Co-op. Housing society, registered under the Andhra pradesh Co-operative societies Act, to cater to the housing needs of the members.

It conducted coaching classes in June, 1976 for the students appearing for the entrance tests conducted by the Osmania University. All the students who got coaching under this scheme got admission. To fight social evils like the dowry system, VGA also launched anti-dowry campaign. In 1977 a novel scheme of having regular monthly get-to-gethers where elite of the communty were facilitated and introduced to the members was begun.

ALL INDIA VYSYA SAMAJ: All India Vysya Samaj was formed in 1979 at Hyderabad by K.C. Gupta, (1) to bring together all Vysyas living in different parts

of the country and speaking different languages (b) to work and strive for the welfare of the Vysyas in all spheres of life, and (3) to do research and publish books on ancient and modern Vysyas in India. K.C. Gupta who was its General Secretary for quite a long time brought out a number of publications in Telegu and English.

VASAVI ACADEMY OF EDUCATION: It was founded in 1980 by intellectuals and industriaists of vysya community for spread of education in general and technical education in particular in view of the importance of Science and technology in future.

FEDERATION OF A.P. STATE VYSYA INSTITUTIONS: K.C. Gupta also started a federation of state vysya institutions in Andhra Pradesh on 20th January, 1983 as an affiliate of all India Vysya Samaj. The purpose of Federation was to bring together different Vysyas organisations and institutions in different parts of Andhra Pradesh on a common platform to discuss and decide common programme for the uplift of Vysyas. One of its programme was to bring out a number of books onVysyas. By the time it completed a decade, it collected one and half a lakh of rupees and published six books at a cost of Rs.40,000/-.

VYSYA GAZETTED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION: In January, 1989, Vysya Gazetted Officers Association was started with the following objectives, (1) to work and stive for the well-being of the members, (2) to advise, guide and help the organizations managed by Arya Vysya Community for its efficient function and service to the community, and (3) to promote close contact between the officers of vysya community.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: Vasavi Directory (1996) lists the educational institutions-many of which are co-educational-managed by Vysyas in different districts of Andhra Pradesh. There are 27 high schools, 13 Junior colleges and 33 Degree colleges. Apart from these there are some I.T.I.s, Institutes of Management, Law college, and Engineering college, etc.

BANKS: In the twin cities, there are two banks organised and managed by Vysyas, (1) Vasavi Co-operative Urban Bank limited with its Head office at Malakpet and (2) Kanyaka Parameshwari Co-operative Bank.

MATTERS RELATING TO THE DEITY: KANYAKA PARAMESHWARI: Juluri Veerasalingam Gupta, the then President of Arya Vysya Sabha (1996), conducted a competition for composing a SUPRABHATAM for Kanyaka Parameshwari. The one written by Jamili Nammalvar of Guntur, was considered the best and declared as the authorised version. A similar authorised version of SAHASRANAMANALI (One thousand names of the deity) a Vasavi prarthana Geetam (a prayer song in honour of Vasavi), and a song to be sung when the VYSYA PATHAKA (Flag of the Vysyas) is hoisted. Efforts are on to bring out an authoritative version of Vasavi Puranam-of Kanyaka Parameswari. A documentary on the History of Vysyas is also planned. A Vasavi Peetham is also set up. (Perhaps it is modelled after the Sringeri or Kanchi Peethams of Sankaracharya).

VYSYA INSTITUTIONS - DENOMINATIONAL?: Challa Kondaiah Committee appointed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to consider matters relating to religious and charitable endowments in their report, considered the Kanyaka Parameswari Temples as general temples. Arya Vysya Maha Sabha as well as the Federation of Kanyaka Parameswari temples, taking objection to this, claimed that Kanyaka Parameswari is the deity of the Vysya and that She is not worshipped by all castes and so Kanyaka Parameswari temples should be considered a denominational temple and for purposes of Article 26 of the Constitution and that only vysyas should be appointed as Trustees of these temples. The proceedings of Andhra Pradesh Arya Vysya Mahasabha on April, 16, 17 of 1988 indicate that the Commission recommended to the Government that only Vysyas may be appointed as Trustees. There seems to be a judicious consenses on treating these institutions as a denominations[12].

FEDERATION OF TEMPLES: The Federation of Vasavi Kanyaka Parameswari Devi Temples and Arya Vysya Charitable institutions, established in 1989 with Headquarters at Cuddapah, conducts training courses for the priests and managers of these institutions to ensure that there is a uniformity in the worship and rituals in different temples. Thanks to the efforts of Vysya Prabhodini, a monthly from Cuddapah, established in 1969, the day on which Vasavi Sacrified herself is being celebrated increasingly by Vysyas in different places. The Federation prescribes the procedures and rituals to be performed on the day.

CHOULTRIES: The Vysyas run Choultries for the benefit of the members of the caste in the following centres of pilgrimage in Andhra Pradesh: (1) Srisailam, (2) Puttaparthi, (3) Tirumala, (4) Mantralayam, (5) Vijayawada, (6) Annavaram, (7) Vemulavada, (8) Ahobilam, (9) Yadagiri Gutta, (10) Bhadrachalam, (11) Basara, (12) Mudhol, (13) Mattapalli, (14) Nacharam, (15) Komaravelli, (16) Koduratoor, (17) Dharmapuri, (18) Mahanandi, and (19) Kaleswaram. Apart from these, choultries are also run in important Pilgrim Centres in other states eg. Banaras in Uttar Pradesh.

MATRIMONAL INFORMATION: The marriage Committee of Arya Vysya Mahasabha has been since 1.1.1998 rendering free service. Parents can send bio-data of their marriagable adults and can get information freely from the office in Visya Bhavan. Vasavi Sravanthi, the monthly issue of the Mahasabha, publishes Matrimonial advertisements at a charge of Rs.100/-.

ARYA VYSYA YUVAJANA SANGHAMS: Arya Vysya Yuvajana Sanghams exist at different places and perform different social fuctions.

VYSYA WELFARE TRUST: The Arya Vysya Maha Sabha has recently established a Vysya Welfare Trust. Sri Rajamouli Gupta, Present President of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha, has appealed to every Vysya-irrespective of age and sex-to contribute five rupees a year for the trust to be used for the welfare of the Vysyas on a permanent basis.

VASAVI SRAVANTHI: Vasavi Sravanthi is a monthly journal brought out by the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha. It was established in 1986. By 1`996, it had a circulation of 5700. One of the Committees of the Sabha is concerned with the Journal. By 31st December, 1999, it had 8486 members of whom 6681 are life members.

Eleven Point Programme

One of the committees of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha deals with the implementation of 11 point programme introduced in 1981 by K. Radha Krishnayya, then President of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha. The programme

consists of the following, (1)Every capable Vysya should support a poor Vysya, (2) Start Cottage industries and provide employment to poor Vysya, (3) Vysyas should take up trade and commerce through co-operative societies and limited companies, (4) Establish housing societies and help houseless Vysyas by construction of houses, (5) Establish Finance Corporation to help poor Vysyas and educated Vysyas to help them to come-up in their professions, (6) Establish Book banks to help to spread education among the Vysyas and help the students with awards and scholarships, (7) Encourage mass marriages without dowry to limit the expenditures on marriages of poor people, encourage youths to establish clubs, Gymnasium, libraries and educational tours should be encouraged, (8) Establish Orphanages, old age homes, old-age pensions, (9) Encouragement of Institutions, Poets/authors, artisits who bring out literature relating to Vysyas, (10) Celebration of Vardhantis, i.e., the days of passing away of greatmen and exhorting Vysyas to take part in large numbers, (11) Free medical care of Vysyas.

DISCUSSIONS ON MATTERS OF COMMON INTERESTS: The concern of the Vysyas for their betterment is evident from the discussions and recommendations of the different groups set-up during the conference in 1998- the Golden Jubilee of Arya Vysya Maha Sabha. These groups are active covering several fields of activities promoting the welfare of the community people.

Preserving the Self respect of Vysyas:

In some Telugu dramas like "Chintamani" and "Kanyasulkam" vysyas were portrayed ridiculously in an effort to put in humour and this was protested by the Vysyas now and then. Sri Rama Naidu, a film producer and Sri Padmanabham, a cine actor. who were thinking of picturising Chintamani, gave up their efforts after the Vysyas protested against it. Vysyas were also able to get judicial orders against staging of 'Chintamani' in certain towns. In some of the plays and playlets broadcast by All India Radio, the portrayal of Vysyas was felt offensive by the Vysyas. On their representation, the Radio expressed its regrets and gave assurances that they would not repeat[13].

VYSYAS AND POLITICS: This note on Vysyas would be incomplete without a reference to their attitude and role in politics in recent years. One important

unwritten rule among the Vysyas is that in the elections to the membership of local bodies-urban or rural- and of the legislature and parliament, Vysyas should not contest against each other and any Vysya contesting the elections, irrespective of the Party lebel on which he is contesting, should be liberally helped by the community. In the Conference held in 1967 in Srisailam, the President of the Conference gave a call to the Vysyas to take initiative in participating in politics. Two decades later, the golden jubilee conference exhorted the Vysyas to devote as much importance and time to politics as they do for their business.

Potti Sriramulu, who fasted unto death for the formation of Andhra was indeed the most respected person of Vysya community. Due to the incessant efforts of the Vysyas, the Govenment of India released a stamp in honour of Potti Sriramulu, the State Government named the Telugu University as Potti Sriramulu Telugu University.

One of the persistent demands-not yet conceded-of the Vysyas is to name Nellore District in which Potti Sriramulu was born, in honour of him. At present there are two districts in Andhra Pradesh named after persons-Prakasam and Ranga Reddy districts. Another demand of the Vysyas is to award Bharat Ratna to Potti Sriramulu.

The Vysyas conducted state level political training camp for men in 1997 June in Srisailam, for women in september, 1997 in Mantralayam, and for students in July, 1998 in Vemulavada. There were some district level camps also.

Jayam Subrahmanyam Chetty, President of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha stated on 27.1.99 that efforts were being made to put up one Vysya candidate from each district in the coming elections to the legislative assembly of Andhra Pradesh[14].

Efforts were made in this direction by Girish Sanghi, Propreitor of VARTHA, a Telugu Daily, by meeting a number of leaders of different parties. Yet they could not secure nomination for many seats. Particularly there was a feeling that Congress did not do justice in the matter of allocation of seats[15].

Under the guidance of the present President Raja Mouli Gupta, the Vysyas organised a VYSYA SANKHARAVAM (Clarian Call to the Vysyas) in July, 1999. A conference of the Vysyas in Hyderabad was attended by Vysyas from different parts of Andhra Pradesh. Vasavi Sravanthi estimated the attendance at the meeting as 5 lakhs. This was preceded by Training Camps for Presidents, General Secretaries and Treasurers of the District Maha Sabha in Amaravathi, a place of pilgrimage in Guntur District. Inspired by the success of the conference, efforts were made to increase political influence of the Vysyas.

By 1999, Chair persons of 11 municipalities (out of a total of 106) were vysyas. In the elections to the Andhra Pradesh legislative assembly in 1999, the number of seats which the different political parties allocated to Vysya candidates are as follows: Congress-5; Telugu Desam-4; Bharatiya Janata Party-1; NTR Telugu Desam Party-5; Communist Party of India-1. In addition a Vysya member of TDP who was denied a seat, resigned from the party and contested as an independent. Of all these, 4 were successful-2 from TDP-1 from Congress and 1 from BJP.

References :

Much of the materials relating to the Vysyas mentioned in the note was provided to me by Sri K.C. Gupta, about 5 years ago. Sri Gupta had inspired many an organisation for the Vysyas and collected and published many booklets on Vysyas. He had also edited Gupta, a monthly from Hyderabad. Recent information on Vysyas was collected through the good offices of Sri Rajamouli Gupta, present president of the Arya Vysya Maha Sabha. I am grateful to them.

1. K.K. Verma, CHANGING ROLE OF CASTE ASSOCIATIONS, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p.14.

2. DIRECTORY 1999-2001, Andhra Pradesh Arya Vysya Maha Sabha, Hyderabad in 1999, p.43.

3. The year is 1907 according to Grandhi Venkata Subbraya Sarma, M. Radha Krishna Murthy in an article entitled "Vysya Mahasavhalu-Nadu, Nedu" in ARYA VYSYA SWARNOTSAVA SANCHIKA, broughout in 1988 by Andhra Prdesh Arya Vysya Maha Sabha states 1906 as the year in which the first Arya Vysya Maha Sabha was held in Guntur.

4. See Utukuri LakshmiKantamma, "Arya Vysya Maha Sabha Vysvastha", in VIJAYA VYSYA, 1977, Op. Cit.

5. D.L. Chetty, "The Provincial Vysya Educational Fund" in VIJAYA VYSYA, 1977.

6. AVOPA, Hyderabad in VIJAYA VYSYA, 1977.

7. See Utukuri Lakshmikantamma, "Arya Vysya Maha Sabha Vyavaatha" in VIJAYA VYSYA, 1977 Op. Cit.

8. VYSYA MAHA SABHALA SAMKSHIPTA NIVEDIKA (1936-1976) p. 44-48.

9. Ibid-Pg. 43-44.

10. See the Pamphlet on Yuvajana Sangh.

11. See VYSYA MAHASABHALA SAMKRIPTA NIVEDIKA (p. 1936-1976).

12. See Sri Kanyaka Parameswari Annasatram Committee and others versus the Commissioner, Andhra Pradesh Hindu religious and Charitable Endowments, 1999 (8), Supreme Court, 120.

13. See Editorial, VYSYA PRABHODHINI, March, 1995, pp.1,2.

14. VASAVI SRAVANTHI, March, 1999, p. 7.

15. VASAVI SRAVANTHI, September, 1999, p. 11.

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